

Communism and the General Strike

by

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This book, product of thirty years of research,
is gratefully dedicated to
E. B. C.
patient colleague and scholar

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PREFACE

This book has a threefold purpose. First, to show the great increase in the use of the general strike since 1931, when the writer's first book was published. The second purpose is to provide a warning to all labor that since 1917 the Communist party has seized upon and all but patented the general strike, and often by abuse and misuse brought it into contempt. In the third place, the writer has noticed, as he has watched the general strike through the decades, a growing use by business and professional men to force moderation from dictators and military Juntas. This last process may be still largely confined to Latin American lands, but it is a trend that is significant and well worth study by the North Atlantic nations. Such a study might, indeed, show us a vast difference in policy and spirit between the Communist party member and the "common man." The general strike may thus gain a new lease on life, but with warm support by the people instead of class or occupational hostility.

In 1931 the University of North Carolina Press published my study The General Strike in Theory and Practice, which dealt with the use of that labor weapon in some fourteen countries and four continents. In the intervening years the general strike has multiplied, especially on a regional or local scale, despite the fact that it has seldom succeeded. What is astonishing is the degree to which it has taken hold in these United States.

When the book was published it was commonly believed that Seattle and Winnipeg were the only examples in North America and that Seattle (1919) was the first American general strike. Subsequent research has shown that this was a misconception, that at least three general strikes were called before the Seattle experience; those in St. Louis in 1877, in New Orleans in 1892, and the prolonged strike in Philadelphia in 1910. It is especially strange that the unusually violent example in Philadelphia should have been so completely forgotten when it came the turn of Seattle, only nine years later. Since 1919 the United States has experienced nine localized general strikes, only one of which could be considered in any sense a victory for labor.

In the spring semester of 1953, through the aid of the Social Science Research Council, I was enabled to take leave of absence from teaching and to utilize the facilities of the Congressional

Library, the Labor Department library, that of the State Department, and the U.S. Archives. The amount of new material on general strikes in all parts of the world made it evident that a completely new book was called for. Such a volume would be peculiarly interesting to the American labor leader, business manager or general citizen, dealing at some length as it does with the incidence of the strike on the North American continent.

The American examples, while they lack the intense ideological atmosphere which surrounds the general strike on the other continents, are sufficiently varied in origin, in purpose, type and violence to give rise to most of the important issues that the general strike usually raises: such as, for example, the question of the "shadow" or rival government which inevitably develops once a general walk-out has started. Inasmuch as this weapon, which always hits the worker first and hardest, is repeatedly used when other channels of protest seem to be closed, it seems proper that Americans should be provided with the necessary data to understand these conflicts when they come, and to meet with wisdom the problems and issues that arise. If this book in any way limits fruitless recourse to this desperate last resort of organized labor, it will be worth the efforts involved.

The most important development in the recent history of the general strike has been the attempt of the Communist party to take it over from non-Communist organized labor and to "patent" it for the purpose of ultimate revolution. By limiting the general strike to one hour, twenty-four hours, or some similar short "demonstration" period and by repetition of this procedure ad nauseam, the Communists have brought the general strike into considerable disrepute. The result is fear on the part of non-Communist labor that any general strike called for no matter how just a reason will be wrecked or subverted to serve the Party Line, before the strike can be called off. Once such a strike has been ordered, there is little to stop the "shock troops" of Communist labor from entering the dispute, exacerbating and lengthening the struggle, causing violence and even death among the strikers — after which anything may happen to the strike and to the purpose for calling it. To the Communist party the general strike plays a specific part in the overthrow of the present system in the "imperialist" world. Sam Darcy, writing in the Communist on the San Francisco strike of 1934, stated this baldly:

It stands to reason that in a revolutionary situation the general strike... would have the object of seizing the industries and eliminating all capitalist control. *

This completely rewritten book has, then, the double purpose, first, of recording the many American general strikes, and second, of showing the calculated abuse of the general strike weapon in recent years by the Communist party the world over and its final boomeranging against the Soviets in East Germany and Hungary.

My warmest thanks are due to the Social Science Research Council for making this project possible; the many government officials who placed at my disposal in the varied libraries much valuable material; my Icelandic friend and student, Einar Benediktsson, who provided me with a great deal of eyewitness information, and Professor Gylfi Gislason of the University of Iceland and Dr. Johann Hannesson, Curator of the Fiske Collection at Cornell University, for further data.

In the preparation of the manuscript I was much indebted to the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation for a grant toward the costs of producing the preliminary drafts and the final fair copy.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Mr. David T. Burbank of St. Louis, whose research into the St. Louis general strike of 1877 resulted in a book on that subject. His generosity in placing at my disposal considerable manuscript material and the microcard film is especially appreciated. In like manner I am indebted to Dr. Roger Shugg for making available his article, "The New Orleans General Strike of 1892," published in the Louisiana Historical Quarterly for April, 1938. Another valuable contribution to the analysis of the general strike in North America is Professor D.C. Masters' work, The Winnipeg General Strike, University of Toronto Press, 1950. Public opinion from 1919 to 1950 to the contrary, Professor Masters concludes this study: "In short, the strike [Winnipeg] was the result of a unanimous movement within the ranks of Winnipeg labour and

*"The San Francisco Bay Area General Strike," in the Communist, Oct. 1934, p. 985. Darcy was alleged to be a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in America. See: Hearings before a Special Committee on un-American Activities, House of Reps. 75th Cong. 3rd Session on House Resolution 282, Vol. I, p. 312.

was not instigated merely by a small radical group" (p. 132). An even more inclusive and provocative American general strike was that in San Francisco in 1934. Around this strike I have written two chapters (VIII and IX) which draw heavily upon The Water Front and General Strikes, San Francisco 1934 by Paul Eliel (1934, Copyright by Eliel), who was Director of the Industrial Relations Department of the Industrial Association of San Francisco. Through the great courtesy of Paul Eliel and his widow, his little book, compact of meticulous labor-management record, has enabled the present writer to devote himself to several critical facets of the San Francisco chronicle.

My deep appreciation should be expressed to Mrs. Katharine Hoffman for her invaluable work on the proofreading.

Last, but by no means least, my warmest thanks are due to the Colgate University Administration for granting leave of absence, and to my colleagues in the Department of Economics who, during my absence in Washington, most generously carried many of my customary academic burdens.

This book is divided into four parts. The first has to do with the early general strikes in Britain and the United States, bringing the story down to Philadelphia in 1910. Part II deals with the practice of the general strike the world over, since 1909, under the different classifications of economic, political and revolutionary. The theory of the general strike, its revolutionary logic, the growing power of citizen self-defense under modern technology, and the effect of the Communist abuse of the strike; these topics will all be found in Part III. Finally, for those who want to study the phenomenon as a whole, there is in the Appendix (Part IV) a series of thumbnail sketches not recorded in the body of the book. An extensive bibliography is provided for those who wish to go more deeply into this field.

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NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

Wilfrid Crook, from 1947 to 1956 the chairman of the Economics Department at Colgate University, is the author of The General Strike (University of North Carolina Press, 1931), and of articles in the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, the Political Science Quarterly and the American Political Science Review. Mr. Crook spent his undergraduate years in Oxford, obtained his Ph.D. from Harvard and had three years of experience on the staff of the National War Labor Board in Washington, D.C. He is joint author of Carver Essays (Harvard, 1935) and Textiles, a Dynamic Industry (Colgate, 1951).

The current outbreak of general strikes as this book goes to press makes it a particularly valuable contribution to our understanding of the general strike as a political weapon. Moreover, its scholarly treatment of the general strike historically, including material from Mr. Crook's first book, which is out of print, deepens and enriches its significance today.

PART I

ORIGINS

Chapter I

A BEAR BY THE TAIL

A bigger pay-check, or a shorter work-week for the same pay, safer working conditions in mine or factory – any, or all of these demands combined, may produce a walk-out, a sit-down or a strike as we generally term it. It is a common enough event and may spread from one factory to another in the same industry, as these demands are fought for. Reporters keep track of these events, sometimes luridly, sometimes with considerable understanding. Editorials are written on the folly of workers who forego a weekly wage for some prolonged period, when the actual economic gain at the settlement may be far less than has been lost by the long walk-out.

Behind all these occurrences there lies the natural desire of groups to better their financial status, achieve a longer spell of leisure, or protect their own welfare and that of their families by the installation of accident prevention schemes and gadgets. In all of these aims lie human and selfish motives that are easily recognized by any man.

But a general strike is quite another breed. Here workers of key industries or governmental services are besought to quit work together for some aim that is far more difficult to understand, because it is far more unselfish and may bring reprisals upon the workers who strike, while yielding to most of such strikers no reward of pay increase or shortening of their work day. Indeed a general strike may well end in the weakening or destruction of many basic trade unions, if, as so commonly happens, it fails to gain its goal. In short, when labor's leaders call a general strike they have a bear by the tail.

The more complete and effective the general strike the more terrifying it becomes to the public, the governmental authorities and in most cases to the leaders of labor themselves. This is particularly true when no terminal date has been set for the strike, for an orderly general walk-out may rapidly become disorderly, if not revolutionary, unless the date of the return is clearly stated. Even when the length of the general strike is definitely limited by its leaders, they cannot be sure that the ranks may not stay out after the official date. The walk-out may be successful enough to make the ranks forget the original

purpose and tempt them to stay out for additional or different aims. Then, indeed, there is the devil to pay. Neither the Swedish strike of 1909 nor the Seattle walk-out in 1919 had any terminal date set at the beginning, nor for that matter did the British strike of 1926, nor that in San Francisco in 1934. As a result all four of these strikes quickly became headaches to the relatively conservative labor leaders. How to let go of the bear without having the brute turn and rend them was the awful problem.

There is a further reason why the general strike is quite another breed from the regular run-of-the-mill walk-out. Common or garden strikes cause annoyance to the public and sometimes to the government. But a general strike constitutes a point-blank challenge to the existing government even more than to the employers involved. The general strike leaders normally do not intend to create a challenge to the existing government, but despite themselves that challenge is there and becomes more and more evident as the days pass without settlement of the struggle. It will be alleged in the press and on radio and TV that the strikers are trying to substitute their own rule for that of popularly elected governments, local, regional or national.

A clear sample of this inevitable trend is the strike exemption permit, issued by the Strike Committee or its delegated sub-committee. Who shall receive these "permits" for the transportation of milk, laundry, fuel and similar vital necessities? What strikers shall be exempted in order to move these permitted necessities? If the number of exemptions grows too many the strike will fail. If permits are refused with logical severity then rumors will rapidly spread that the strike leaders intend to starve the people, and any public support of the strike will dwindle. Thus, before they know it, the strike leaders are being accused of setting up a shadow government or aiming at a revolutionary overthrow of the existent popular rule.

One of the most irritating actions of the strike leaders is the posting of a notice on each exempted truck announcing: By Permission of the Strike Committee. The police are apt to ban such notices and the public quickly resorts to Citizens' Committees consisting of volunteers, more or less trained, who will offer their services to the government and thereby stiffen the resistance of both sides in the struggle. This was true of the Winnipeg general strike in 1919 and in several cases in the United States and elsewhere.

A third basis for this "bear by the tail" situation, ever since 1917 (when the Minority Soviets overthrew the Russian government by preliminary general strikes, before the actual revolution with armed force), has been the part that Communists have played in most of the general strikes that have occurred since that date. In strongly democratic lands, such as Britain or Scandinavia, the Communist influence behind a general strike has been meager if not negligible. In such countries the Party has played little part in vital decisions but has watched like a hawk for chances to make trouble within the ranks of organized or unorganized labor. Part of this technique has been the constant Communist attack upon the more conservative leaders of labor, with the intent of switching control to the Party at some strategic moment. This was evident in the San Francisco walk-out of 1934, but ultimately unsuccessful. In less democratic lands, such as Italy and even, perhaps, France, the Party has called multitudinous 24-hour strikes with political aim, and by that method has ultimately so grossly abused the general strike as to drive away from the Party tens of thousands of workers. UNRRA, the Marshall Plan and NATO have all been victims of strike-demonstrations called by the Party, without consideration whether the aim of the strike has been one appealing to vital economic needs of the actual worker.

It should be evident that non-Communist labor leaders find themselves in a grave quandary when they want to call a general strike for genuine economic goals. Their natural fear is that the Party will take over the demonstration, aggravate existing class lines, cause violence and death among the strikers and completely subvert the original purpose of the strike call.

To change the metaphor, the general strike is a boomerang. It hits labor even harder than it does the public. The longer the strike, the more grievous is the blow it deals to the poorest ranks of labor. The other economic classes can, temporarily at least, remove themselves from the scene of struggle, or obtain and store at least a minimum of daily necessities, before the strike breaks out. The average worker, however, never possessing more than a very few days' supplies at best, after a stubborn walk-out is in desperate straits, unless government or strike leaders plan to feed the hungry. And then, who shall be fed? And who will handle the food distribution? Once again we are round the circle at the problem of "permits" and the Shadow Government.

The general strike is a boomerang, not only in the matter of the supply of daily necessities, but in what happens to the ranks of labor politically as well as in the economic field. Rare are occasions when the strike is won, and defeat of a general strike of any duration means reprisals on the part of employers and the government. Sometimes the leaders of the strike are imprisoned, as in Winnipeg. More often the long-time tradition of trade unions and agreements between them and the employers is badly strained, even if some of the unions are not destroyed. Collective bargaining is damaged and contracts are held broken, with consequent loss of seniority and pension rights. On the political field a slow build-up of a labor party, locally or nationally, may be set back for decades. It was twenty years before the British unions could repeal the savagely punitive Trades Unions Act of 1927, direct outcome of the great strike that failed in 1926.

What, then, is this general strike that, like the boomerang, may turn and destroy its makers and users? In essence it is the walk-out of the workers in the key industries and services of a particular area, local or national. It produces relative paralysis in a community's economic life. Its purpose is to achieve certain desired ends of labor, organized or unorganized. It is seldom, if ever, called for purely selfish motives of the unions involved, but rather is a sympathetic cessation of work to aid in the solution of an already existent economic struggle, as in Britain, Winnipeg or San Francisco. Or it may be a mass protest of labor against action of an economic or political nature by the recognized government of the area. Examples would be Rochester, N. Y., in 1946, or Belgium in 1950. In the first instance municipal employees were fired for belonging to a union. In the second a Naziphile king was being imposed upon the divided Belgian nation.

It is not easy to classify the dozens of general strikes that have occurred in the past century, in almost every portion of the globe, from Philadelphia to Iceland, from Great Britain to Singapore, from the African Gold Coast to Chile. A century's examples, however, seem to show at least three kinds based largely upon the purpose of the conflict, viz: economic, political or revolutionary. Any one of these types can change, slowly or rapidly, into one of the others as the strike proceeds. That is why the members of the I. W. W. (Industrial Workers of the World) in the early years of this century included the general

strike in their program of action. That is why the modern Communist has such frequent recourse to that kind of strike, always with hope that an economic or political general strike may become a revolutionary one. That is why conservative, non-Communist leaders have a secret fear of that labor weapon no matter how disciplined is their rank and file.

Those whose philosophy places a permanent ban upon the general strike are apt to see a revolutionary strike in the purest economic struggle. Winston Churchill in 1926 could without a qualm of conscience speak of disciplined, organized British labor under the leadership of their conservative Trades Union Conference as "The Enemy," because they called a general walk-out to save the miners from a wage cut and a lengthened week. Many West Coast American citizens and business men thought that the San Francisco strike of 1934 was revolutionary from the start. They failed, however, to see that the tactics of the conservative labor men held the line against the combination of Bridges and the Communists.

It is well to glance at each of the three types of general strike beginning with the strictly economic one. This walk-out aims to hamstring the economic system for the time being, in order to redress specific economic injustices or to bring about advances in industrial life. Most of these are plainly sympathy strikes, and are called with the whole labor movement in mind, rather than any one union, no matter how powerful that one union may be. At the outset this kind of conflict is directed at the employers. Threats of wage cuts, or of lengthening the normal work-week are typical of the basic, original cause of such a strike call. Sweden, Britain and San Francisco, Seattle and Winnipeg are all samples of the economic strike. The precise demand may vary from a labor-controlled hiring hall to a particular form of collective bargaining, or it may be the simply phrased ultimatum of the British workers "Not a penny off the pay, Not a minute on the day." It is characteristic of the Communists the world over that even when they start a general strike with an economic motive, once the strike is rolling they rapidly switch the aim to a political or revolutionary one. The non-Communists stand by their original stated purpose and struggle to prevent their goal from being subverted. This intra-labor struggle has happened often in France and provides one reason for the relative weakness of that country's labor movement. Economic general strikes that have achieved their aim

can be counted on one hand. None of the five referred to above was successful, though San Francisco came nearer than most to achievement.

A political general strike is apt to be invoked to gain some new constitutional right for the working population. Belgium in 1913 offers such an example, where universal manhood suffrage was demanded of a conservative Parliament and Cabinet. There the workers' demand found wide support from middle-class citizens with the result that order in the strike was maintained throughout the country although the actual "one man, one vote" was not immediately yielded. Political general strikes have also taken place to save a democratic government from destruction by reactionary groups. Thus Germany, in 1920, fought the Kapp-Putsch and the Junkers by means of a most effective whole-sale walk-out. In 1934 French labor ceased work for 24 hours to prevent the usurpation of the French government by Fascist-Loyalists. Cyprus has given many single-day political strikes in its struggle to obtain from Britain Enosis with Greece.

In the revolutionary general strike the leaders aim from the outset to throw the whole life of the nation into confusion and thus to overthrow the existing economic and political order. Examples are Russia in 1905 and 1917, Spain in the nineteen-thirties, many work stoppages in the Latin-American nations, and, of course, the startling combination of a general strike and fighting in the streets, which accompanied the Hungarian uprising against the Communists and the Soviet Army, in 1956.

In between the political and the revolutionary general strikes lies a kind of half-world in which large numbers of conflicts have occurred, mainly initiated by the Communists with the purpose of intervening in international political life, but with a sneaking hope that revolution will be the outcome. The effort to defeat the Marshall Plan by general strike demonstrations was a case in point.

When, in 1931, the writer published his first book (The General Strike, University of North Carolina Press), there lay before him data on a round dozen important examples, scattered over five continents. Today, when Communists the world over have been using and grossly abusing this method of labor conflict, there would be no difficulty in listing well over a hundred such strikes, albeit the vast majority of them failures. Hardly a country has escaped, and some have become accustomed to nearly one a year. Even in these United States research

has uncovered a dozen general walk-outs as well as that in Seattle in 1919, which most people hold incorrectly to be the first in our national history.

Neither race, nationality, economic status nor religion seems to have blocked the general strike. The Gold Coast, (now Ghana) in the West of Africa and the Arabs in Northern and Eastern regions; Hindus in Calcutta and Bombay; Protestant and Catholic Belgians seeking universal suffrage or a shorter training period for their citizen soldiers; rich San Francisco and poverty-stricken China; all have shared the experience of the general strike. These strikes have ranged in duration, from fifteen minutes of international protest organized by the Communist Party against the execution of the Rosenbergs in U. S. A., to the two-month strike in China in 1925.

The most hopeful yet ironic examples of the great walk-out have occurred in East Germany and Hungary, in 1953 and 1956 respectively, where long-trained Communist youth turned, like the boomerang, against its trainer, and thereby deeply compromised and vastly embarrassed the Soviet masters behind the Curtain. It must be difficult for a Party so thoroughly tagged with abuse of the general strike to make it clear to Satellite nations that now there is no acceptable reason for using such a weapon against the powers that be.

Time was when the general strike was an unusual event. Today it is a frequent, 24-hour demonstration, or even a "lunch-hour strike" (Stamford, Connecticut). As a result the method is losing the respect of the labor ranks. General strikes for Kremlin reasons are losing face even in France, where the ranks of the Communist-controlled C. G. T. (Federation of Labor) are becoming bored to death with the abuse of this weapon. In the recent Hungarian revolutionary strike against the Soviets French Communists failed to respond to the canard that the Budapest struggle was just another "imperialist outrage" against peace-loving Russia.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to underestimate the significance of general strikes. They are the danger signals of deep labor grievance underlying the immediate alleged causes of an outbreak. It is not enough to ferret out the Communist element behind recent general strikes. Too many lands in four of the world's continents have their people on the borderline of hunger for their governments to rest content with Citizens' Committees, Public Security Brigades or the armed forces. No

man throws away his job for fun. To get millions of workers out on the picket line requires a tremendous feeling of urgency. The general strike may be a boomerang, yet it remains a technique to which workers in every part of the world will resort so long as unbearable injustices are felt by the masses and no other channel of communication and complaint seems open to them.

Chapter II

BRITAIN, HOME OF THE GENERAL STRIKE

"Grand National Holiday"

The history of the general strike in the past century and a half points to Great Britain as its early source, both in theory and practice. It had its roots in the most sordid and unhappy years of the Industrial Revolution, during the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century. If any person can be called the originator of the general strike idea, it is William Benbow, Quaker radical, labor agitator and pamphleteer, who was born in 1784, married and living in Manchester by 1817. Among the booklets he published was a "best seller" in pamphlet form, entitled Grand National Holiday and Congress of the Productive Classes, written, printed and published by himself.

William Benbow and the Chartists

Benbow was a fiery speaker, causing much embarrassment to his fellow labor agitators because of his advocacy of "armed revolution." Benbow's own pamphlet gives a taste of his style. In the dedication he wrote: "Plundered fellow sufferers! I lay before you a plan of freedom. Adopt it and you rid the world of inequality, misery and crime.... A plan of happiness is pointed out and dedicated to you.¹ With it I devote to you my life and body, my soul and blood." Said Benbow: "All men enjoy life, but do not enjoy it equally.... The only class of persons in society, as it is now constituted, who enjoy any considerable portion of ease, pleasure and happiness, are those who do the least towards producing anything good or necessary for the community at large."² Benbow contended that one out of five hundred controlled the remaining four hundred and ninety-nine; that the 499, because of their ignorance, toiled incessantly for others. To Benbow what the 499 lacked was "a knowledge of ourselves; a knowledge of our own power, of our immense might, and the right we have to employ in action that immense power."³ Benbow's panacea was a "Grand National Holiday" — what we today would call a general strike, during which no worker would produce, until equal rights for all and equal sharing of production would be forthcoming.

Before the "Grand National Holiday" could take place all men must prepare for it by laying up a stock of food to last at least a week. During the Holiday "cunning and wise men" were to be chosen to form a national congress whose task would be to devise a plan to reduce or abolish the wretchedness and slavery of the masses. Committees of Management must be appointed in every city, town and village to look after the workers during the last three weeks of the "Sacred Month" or "National Holiday." These Committees would also be responsible for local order and would punish any who attempted to use violence.

Liberal-minded noblemen would be glad to provide food for such a crisis, Benbow believed. Furthermore, the meeting-place of these Committees would be "in a mansion of some great liberal lord." The purpose of the mass walk-out would be to "reform society." "Everything, men, property, and money, must be put into a state of circulation...to obtain for all, at the least expense to all, the largest sum of happiness for all."⁴ There is a strangely modern tone about this whole theory of reforming society. The preparation for the Grand National Holiday, and the setting up of strike-management committees and Labor Police is paralleled by the action of modern general strike leaders.

There is no question that Benbow's speeches and his pamphlet had a marked influence both on labor leaders and on popular politicians — the Chartists. The latter were so affected by the theory of the Grand National Holiday as to plan for its use in order to wring the Reform Charter from a conservative Parliament, in the years 1838-39. "A national strike for one week, during which not a hammer was to be wielded, not an anvil sounded, nor a shuttle moved, throughout the country" would bring effective pressure to bear upon the House of Commons.⁵ Chartist leader Atwood, who proposed this strike, was not a physical force advocate but seemed to think that a general strike would check the wilder counsels of violence then current.

When the petition for the Charter was rejected by Parliament in a five to one vote, July 12, 1839, the dwindling Charter Convention turned to the "Sacred Month" or Grand National Holiday as their last weapon. Yet even at this critical juncture the Convention members gave no thought to the essential preparation of food or funds. One must suppose that they decided that the strikers could live on the countryside. A mere handful of delegates raised the vital question: "Are we going to let loose

hundreds of thousands of desperate and hungry men upon society without having any specific object in view or any plan of action laid down, but trusting to a chapter of accidents as to what the consequences should be?"⁶

Finally convinced of the folly of calling a national stoppage without knowledge of the numbers who would respond, and without adequate organization, the rump Convention resolved that the "Sacred Month" was, for the moment at least, "impracticable." Wholesale arrests of prominent Chartists, including Benbow (who received an eighteen-month sentence), and the fiasco of the Chartist Convention's "Sacred Month" ended for the time being serious consideration of the general strike as a revolutionary weapon for reform. When the idea reappeared, in 1842, it came like an explosion from the ranks of the workers themselves rather than from the theoretical supporters of the political Charter.

Pilling's "Plug Plot"

If William Benbow was the father of the "Sacred Month" or Grand National Holiday in the eighteen-thirties, so in 1842 Richard Pilling became the leader of the first large-scale application of the general strike theory, the workers' uprising in Britain known as the "Plug Plot." Pilling, son of a hand-loom weaver, was born in 1800. He followed his father's trade until the power loom destroyed the market for his goods. In 1833 Pilling entered the factory, which he had always despised. He had as a young man been present at the "massacre" of the workers at Peterloo, near Manchester, by the armed yeomanry. From the moment of that experience he became a determined radical. Later he joined the ten-hour movement, turned trade union enthusiast and became a Chartist in politics. This lost him his job in 1840. At his trial Pilling stated that he earned sixteen shillings the first week he worked as a hand-loom weaver, when he was only ten years of age. Thirty years later, working a twelve-hour day in the factory, he was only able to make six shillings and sixpence a week. Pilling saw his family slowly starve on a diet of potatoes and salt, and his eldest son die of consumption. Little wonder that he agitated for the ten-hour day and organized strikes around the district in which he lived.

Conditions were ripe for protest. The Chartist movement had failed to persuade Parliament to give voting power to the vast

new industrial cities. Bitter feelings of the working class on this failure of the Charter were aggravated by the economic conditions of low wages and unemployment, under which General Sir Charles Napier was forced to admit that "a good workman in full wages must starve."⁷

Pilling asserted that for all his twelve-hour day in the factory, working each year harder than the last, the poorer he became.⁸ There is no reason to believe that Pilling was exaggerating the plight of the workers, and there is no need to read into the "Plug Plot" the machinations of the Chartists. Wages were cut again and again until the workers could say: "Much is said about overproduction, and the markets being glutted; in order to obviate the first let us all work ten hours a day, and we are sure it will lessen the amount of goods in the market; the home consumption will also be considerably increased by increasing the wages of the laborer."⁹ Even the shopkeepers were willing to pass resolutions in support of a "fair day's wage for a fair day's work."¹⁰

In July 1842, with virtually no warning, the mine owners in the British midlands reduced the miners' wages by one-eighth. The workers, already barely living, could stand no more and appealed against the cut to the local magistrates. The owners closed the mines, not waiting for intervention from outside. The struggle spread rapidly, with the locked-out miners marching upon near-by establishments and persuading or forcing the workers in each place to join them. The flame of worker revolt then spread to Wales and the North of England, with Pilling and his organized textile workers as a leading part of the movement.

To the purely economic demands of the marching workers was promptly added the political demand for the Charter. This turned several of their erstwhile middle-class supporters against them. From mill to mill and mine to mine the workers marched, pulling the plugs from the factory boilers so that no steam power would be available. This act gave the name "Plug Plot" to the revolt.¹¹

Committees of Public Safety regulated the conduct of the mob of strikers, making exemptions in certain cases, such as the grain mills where the produce would otherwise have spoiled. Thus even at this early date strike committees were temporarily playing the role of government. These same committees compelled the merchants of the affected areas to furnish

contributions of food and money. Some violence occurred as the marching men plundered the food shops and the bakeries. In one county buildings were burned, but generally no damage was inflicted upon machinery. In Manchester the soldiers who met the marching strikers put the responsibility for order on the shoulders of the workers' leaders, and the latter broke up their massed forces into smaller groups, which went from factory to factory in the city, bringing out the operatives.

Pilling states that at the outset of the big strike of August 1842 barely five dollars existed in the strike treasury. Benbow's proposed method of living off the country was therefore inevitable. The really amazing fact was the small degree of damage or plundering that occurred while the desperate workers for one week virtually held possession of the richest center of the textile industry in the world.¹² Despite intense and widespread want, barely one-seventh of the population took part in the strike, even in the districts affected. The trade unions were largely opposed to the walk-out. Under modern conditions one would hardly deem the Plug Plot a genuine general strike, but it came nearer to it than any subsequent uprising in Britain until 1926.

At its height the Plug Plot brought forth from political Chartist leaders enthusiastic support by word of mouth, but most of the Chartists gave no thought to the urgent problem of feeding the workers. Nor was consideration given by the majority of the Chartists to the method by which the workers could avoid being mowed down by the large number of armed forces available in the strike area. Typical of this betrayal was Chartist O'Connor's decision to "leave to the people" the issue of continuing the strike until the charter was won. Meanwhile O'Connor hurried back to London, declaring that the strike was a crafty device of the mill-owners to take the public mind away from the Charter.

The end of the Plug Plot was as tragic for labor as any subsequent general strike. Gradually starvation forced the strikers back to work, and in some instances they found that they had to take even lower wages than when they walked out. Wholesale arrests were made of strike leaders and Chartists.¹³ Among them was Richard Pilling. His speech to the jury in March 1843 deserves to become a classic in labor history. A few sentences will show how vivid a picture he painted of economic pressure and workers' distress:

Gentlemen of the Jury, it has been said that I was the father of the uprising. If that is so let me be punished and let the rest go free. But I contend that it is not I that am the parent of this movement, but rather the House (of Commons). Our petitions have been presented to it and it has not done justice to our grievances. And that alone is the cause....

Despite my hatred of the factory system, rather than become a pauper dependent upon the aid of the parish, I submitted. I was not long in the factory before I saw the evil effects of this accursed system, because it is this system above all others that will drive the country to ruin if not modified. After seven years of work in the mill, wage cuts began to creep in.... There were always some employers who wanted to give lower wages than the others. Seeing that this would be an evil and a detriment to the employers, the owners of workers' cottages and the tavern keepers, and recognizing that everything hinged on the workers' wages, I became a thoroughgoing opponent of wage-cuts, and as long as I live I shall try to preserve the wage-rates with all my might....

Gentlemen of the Jury, my son died before the beginning of the strike.... It was under such circumstances that I happened to go to Stockport, enraged, I'll admit, by the loss of my son and simultaneously by the wage-cut of 25%, for I admit that sooner than live to endure another reduction of 25% I would rather put an end to my existence.... The workers were so incensed that not only those who were Chartists, but all of every opinion, assembled; one meeting place that could hold a thousand individuals was filled to suffocation...and there properly speaking is where the strike began; it burst forth in one minute from one end of the hall to the other; Whigs, Tories, Chartists, disreputable radicals, and all others....¹⁴

At the end of his address to the jury Pilling declared that he had no doubt but that the verdict would permit him to "return to his wife, his children and his job." He was right. His speech resulted in his acquittal. Pilling took his philosophy from his own bitter life experience, with a large share of common sense

and keen observation. His speech to the jury sounds amazingly like the combination of the Keynesians and the New Dealers, with emphasis on the cessation of cut-throat competition in factory wages, lest the buying power of the whole working class dwindle to zero and society itself collapse.

A further significant likeness between the old and the new general strikes can be seen in the unpreparedness that runs through both alike. A week's stock of food in each man's larder. After that, says Benbow, "cattle on the thousand hills" will provide food for the striking masses. As for Pilling, the "strike fund" that did not exceed five dollars is an indication that not even one week's stock of food was possible in the ranks of Pilling's starving factory workers.

The use of strike exemptions — in later general strikes called strike committee permits — in the earliest walk-out is an example of a common pattern of difficulties once a "sacred holiday" has started. From the point of view of the authorities the strike brought forth an inevitable recourse to the military. This indicated clearly enough that those with property interests were not likely to yield, even for a week, to the complete control of social life by the workers, organized or unorganized. Thus Pilling's Plug Plot was paralleled in Winnipeg, Britain and San Francisco, to mention but a trio of later general strikes, by the intervention of the military, the more completely the more general was the strike. In over one century of practical experience with the general strike no one has discovered how to eliminate the military from the actual scene, or from the proximate background. Nor has order on the part of the strikers forestalled the mobilization of the soldiery before the dread weapon of the "sacred holiday."

Chapter III

EARLY AMERICAN GENERAL STRIKES

When The General Strike was published in 1931 it seemed to be common belief in labor circles that the first general strike in North America had occurred in Seattle in 1919, followed in the same year by that in Winnipeg. Further research raised the question: Where was the first general strike – in Britain or America? It is clear that Benbow's pamphlet, described in the preceding chapter, had been published and much discussed at least three years before an alleged general strike broke out in Philadelphia in 1835. Pilling's "Plug Plot" of 1842 in Britain had not yet occurred, but Pilling was already deeply disturbed about the evils of the English textile factories, and was among the most enthusiastic workers for the ten-hour day in his own land.

Philadelphia in 1835

American efforts to attain the ten-hour day with two hours for meals were many in the early eighteen-thirties, but only in 1835 in Philadelphia did the agitation win quick success as the outcome of a so-called general strike. The excitement of joint action stemmed from a circular issued in Boston calling for a ten-hour day. Ferral, a Philadelphia labor leader, wrote a friend in Boston that the circular was stirring profound interest among his people.¹

The shoemakers began the series of strikes, which by June, 1835, became a movement of building craftsmen, cigar-makers, carters, bakers, drygoods clerks and many others. A mass meeting on June 6 adopted a resolution demanding a ten-hour day. Groups of professional men and other responsible citizens gave the resolution full endorsement, and discussed as well the manifest inadequacy of the prevailing wages. The workers paraded with banners, stirring fellow workers to join in, much as did Pilling's men in England in 1842. Even those on public works went along. Business was brought to a stand-still. All the strikes were won, and even the cities of Philadelphia and Southwark cut hours and raised pay for public employees.²

It is a question if this "turn-out" of over a dozen trades could be considered a simon-pure general strike. While it was virtually spontaneous, no mention is made of a guiding strike committee (except for the drafting committee for the ten-hour

resolution) common to all real general strikes. As against these parades, an Executive Committee was present in the St. Louis strike of 1877, concerning which David Burbank has made intensive research.³ There the call for a general strike went forth from the Executive Committee, led and influenced by the Working Men's Party (a group socialistic in ideology and political in make-up).

St. Louis, First American General Strike?

The mid-depression period on the American railroads, in 1877, brought with it in several cities a situation approximating a general strike. Efforts at establishing a National Labor Federation had failed with the death of William Sylvis. Many a national union had dwindled to nothing under the economic pressure of the long depression. Yet at such a time the threat of wage cuts provoked a labor upheaval on the railroads and in some instances spread widely into other industries. In St. Louis a general strike was actually called and lasted with great effect for forty-eight hours. The fact that it was organized and led by a political party makes it peculiar in the history of the general strike in the United States — unless one believes that the struggle in San Francisco in 1934 was controlled and run by the Communist Party.⁴

The rail strike began on July 16 and rapidly assumed an aspect of violence and destruction in such cities as Baltimore and Pittsburgh. The press reacted promptly to the strike destruction and public opinion, that had been sympathetic to labor, swiftly veered with the hysterical cry in the newspapers of "revolution." The railroad employees showed efficiency in their spontaneously created strike committee, which organized and enforced the strike even against the official opposition of the rail brotherhoods. In this the committees bore a strong likeness to the Communist "rank-and-file movement" in San Francisco in 1934, which tried hard to grasp control of the general strike from the hands of the conservative labor leaders.

On Sunday July 22 the strike reached East St. Louis, a railroad center across the river from St. Louis, and the terminal of Northern, Eastern and Southern lines. That day an Executive Committee of railwaymen was elected and a smaller committee was formed from it, which ran the strike in East St. Louis and kept excellent order. The strikers' demands were primarily the cancellation of wage cuts. The Mayor of

East St. Louis cooperated with the strike committee to the degree that he appointed special police from the strikers' ranks. That action went much further than that of most city authorities faced with a general strike. Usually any offer of "labor police" is indignantly rejected by the mayors or police chiefs of the cities involved.

The Working Men's Party

The strike in St. Louis developed in its own way. A large industrial city, St. Louis was suffering from severe unemployment. The local labor movement was reduced to a shadow. Even the local labor council had disintegrated. Business men in St. Louis seem to have felt that the western railroad lines would not be affected, and that the city, therefore, would not be involved. In St. Louis on Monday, following the Sunday mass meeting in East St. Louis, there was no evidence of a strike threat, general or otherwise. That very evening, however, the first of a series of mass meetings took place in Lucas Market with speeches that alarmed the business community but gave forth no call for a general strike. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Working Men's Party, its main speakers were of that party, and no mention was made in the press of any trade union delegations present. "From the very beginning of the St. Louis strike the Working Men's Party assumed the leadership."⁵

The Working Men's Party was established as a national organization in 1876 through the amalgamation of several socialist groups, including the American branch of the First International. At its inception the party had a membership of less than three thousand, mostly Germans, with a program far from revolutionary, advocating the eight-hour day and abolition of child labor. The German socialist movement in St. Louis had its origins in the forties.⁶

On Tuesday, July 24, sporadic strikes began with the coopers walking out, along with some of the staff at the gas works. The engineers on the river boats won pay increases. Sometime during the day delegates from trade unions and factories met with the Working Men's Party and formed an Executive Committee, which from then on planned and controlled the general strike, a call for which went forth that very evening at a mass meeting of 10,000 to 25,000. The call was later printed as a handbill in both English and German, and gave as the objects of the

strike an eight-hour day and a ban on the employment of children under fourteen.⁷

The Executive Committee pledged its cooperation in keeping order during the strike. Business men, however, after some indecision by the mayor, made plans for a volunteer militia, under the direction of a six-man Committee of Public Safety. This militia was armed by the merchants of St. Louis and by the State authorities. Wednesday, July 25, 1877, saw the Executive (Strike) Committee planning to shut down all the city's industries. Early in the afternoon a mass meeting of strikers and sympathizers gathered at Lucas Market, by order of the Executive Committee. Five thousand marchers paraded from factory to factory, causing industry to close where it had not already been ordered by management. Public utilities continued to function throughout the strike, apparently with the approval of the Executive Committee.⁸

The mass meeting on Wednesday night marked the peak of the strike. None of the speakers gave attention to the serious problems of the workers' demands in the various industries or to organization and negotiation of settlement terms. The press, German and English, on Thursday "reported with indignation and horror the events of the previous day; and the newspapers' talk of the 'St. Louis Commune,' coupled with unrestrained denunciation of the 'Internationalists,' chilled St. Louis' more prosperous citizens, for whom the Paris Commune of 1871 was recent history."⁹

Another mass parade took place on Thursday afternoon and what businesses were not already closed were then shut down. This parade was neither so large nor so disciplined as the one of the previous day. There was some question whether the Executive Committee had actually authorized the parade. It is true, however, that the Committee sent out groups of strikers to extend the walk-out. By this time the Committee began to recognize the awkward position in which it stood, as head of a mass labor movement with a growing threat of military intervention. Says David Burbank: "The Executive Committee seems to have been so preoccupied with its own problems that it neglected the Thursday evening mass meeting at Lucas Market and so, perhaps, failed to mobilize its supporters at a crucial moment... speakers were not provided by the Committee, or else they arrived too late, and the crowd drifted away."¹⁰

In the meantime the Committee of Public Safety had not been

idle. Several thousand volunteers had been organized and armed. Till Thursday an inadequate force of police had been largely absent from public sight. Thursday evening's fiasco in the mass meeting seems to have been a signal to the Committee on Public Safety. A few arrests were made Thursday and again on Friday morning. Friday saw action by the State. The Governor called upon the strikers to disband and return to work. The Adjutant General summoned the posse to report at the Sheriff's office in the Four Courts Building, headquarters of the citizens' volunteer militia. Friday afternoon the strike dramatically ended as the police and militia "with cavalry, artillery and ambulance" marched on Schuler's Hall, headquarters of the strike. There was no resistance and no bloodshed, but most of the active strike leaders were arrested.¹¹

Burbank comments on the leadership of the St. Louis general strike:

The few references to the trade unions in the newspaper accounts suggest that the unions themselves were too weak to assume the leadership of the strike, and that the Working Men's Party was, in fact, the only organization that could furnish leadership and direction. It seems quite clear, however, that the Working Men's Party and its Executive Committee had plenty of orators, but no one with the experience and acumen to organize the strike movement on a solid basis or to bring the strike to an end before it was suppressed, so as to hold some of the ground gained in the strike.¹²

As it was the unions appear to have gained nothing. The Socialist movement in St. Louis seems to have made what gains there were, on the plane of minor electoral victories and the establishment of a daily Socialist newspaper. Burbank shows, however, that the socialist movement itself soon "lapsed into the state of chronic factional intrigue and sectarian isolation from the general labor movement," characteristic of the Marxian Socialist movement in America between the sixties and the nineties.

New Orleans in 1892

The second general strike in the United States has been uncovered by Mr. Roger Shugg in his article published in 1938,

based largely upon data contained in the New Orleans newspapers.¹³ The strike occurred at the peak of the labor movement in the South during the nineteenth century. Its purpose, like its occurrence, was a great shock to the South — "union recognition, the right to collective bargaining, and a preferential closed shop." Mr. Shugg concluded that "The general strike of 1892, if not defeated, would have marked the greatest victory of the American Federation of Labor in its early career, made New Orleans a city of the closed shop, and raised up urban allies for the rural Louisiana populists."¹⁴

The Old South, being typically agricultural rather than industrial, was naturally hostile to trade unions, but the "War between the States" brought federal occupation of New Orleans. Several thousands of workers were "beneficiaries of the high wages fixed by military decree." A rash of temporary unions resulted, but their effort to support the Reconstruction signally failed. The Knights of Labor included white and colored. In some single assemblies no less than 5,000 Negroes joined membership. This was their undoing and that of the Knights also, for to the whites this seemed just another race-rising that smacked of the Reconstruction. After a strike in the sugar fields Negro leaders were "jailed and then run out of town to avoid lynching."¹⁵

The New Orleans street-car drivers' strike was a close forerunner of the general strike of 1892. A long established drivers' union had vainly fought the sixteen-hour day. Public opinion was with them to cut this to a twelve-hour day at the same pay. The men won an agreement, soon violated by the company. Ere long the men who had sponsored the strike were dismissed on frivolous charges. On the third week in May, 1892, the drivers went out on strike, demanding the preferential union shop. The Mayor of New Orleans earnestly sought arbitration. Both sides ignored his pleas. The city's craft unions stood ready to give their support, while the press attacked the Mayor for refusing to allow the city's police to be strike-breakers. A Committee of fifty of the city's leading merchants demanded that the militia be called, and then resorted to the local courts. The drivers' union officers were arrested on a charge of violating a Reconstruction conspiracy law. This brought the strikers to terms, but they won their preferential shop.¹⁶

This street-car strike involved less than a thousand men and was over inside a week, but it raised the issue of whether New Orleans should go union shop. Rapid labor organization took

place so that just before the general strike there were some ninety-five different unions. A Workingmen's Amalgamated Council was established consisting of two delegates from each of the forty-nine unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, then barely six years old. The Council represented about twenty thousand workers. On the opposite side the employers' Board of Trade and the commodity and security exchanges had wide influence upon property owners and business men in general. By the summer of 1892 the workers were demanding recognition of their unions as well as shorter hours and better pay.

A "Triple Alliance" was formed out of the Teamsters, the Scalesmen, and the Packers. At the peak of New Orleans' business year, October 24, over two thousand of the Triple Alliance quit work because the Board of Trade refused to grant them a ten-hour day, with overtime pay and the preferential union shop. The employers looked to the Governor and the Courts; the Triple Alliance turned towards the Workingmen's Amalgamated Council. Direction of the strike was put into the hands of five "conservative leaders of the oldest unions."¹⁷

For a week the employers heard complaints from individual employees, purposely ignoring the Triple Alliance unions. Then the Labor Committee, pressed by the indignation of the ranks, called a general strike. The Board of Trade yielded, met the union leaders and reached an agreement to resume work pending a final settlement. Instead of improving, the situation grew worse. Some workers refused to return. Some employers filled vacant jobs. Again the general strike was called and again postponed when the Mayor asked both sides to meet him and the City Council. The end was failure; the business men accused the Mayor of being a labor politician; the unions were ready for immediate arbitration, but the employers refused to consider the Triple Alliance strike until it was cancelled.

There was nothing left for labor to do except to meet the challenge, and accordingly a general strike was finally set for Monday morning, November 7. During the week-end the unions polled their members in heated meetings which generally ratified the strike order. Despite such eagerness for a demonstration of strength, the Labor Committee did all in its power to avoid it.¹⁸

The Strike Hits New Orleans

The die was cast. Twenty thousand workers from forty-two unions quit work. Business was almost at a standstill. Unlike most sympathy strikes, each union made its own demands, yet the crafts unions gave support to the unskilled white and colored workers of the Triple Alliance. With two exceptions no union went on strike if it entailed breaking a contract. The two exceptions were the street-car drivers, who had just signed an agreement, and the printers who had the oldest union in the city. Some of the workers in the utilities joined the strike. The merchants demanded that the Mayor operate the utilities with volunteers who would be paid by the merchants. The Mayor refused, claiming that his powers were restricted to the preservation of order. At the Governor's request, and in the face of defiance of the workers concerned, the Labor Committee ordered the immediate resumption of all utilities. Fear of anarchy stirred the public and was aggravated by comments of the press. Yet disorder was feared rather than actual. After the strike was over even the conservative press admitted that there had been no violence.¹⁹

Watched closely by the leaders of business and industry in the North and West, New Orleans merchants and employers were determined that the unions should be met and defeated at that crucial juncture. The rural areas overwhelmingly supported the Board of Trade, as did all the press except the Item. Southern ports and industrial cities were combed for strike-breakers and the latter were imported with the aid of the railroads. The Labor Committee beat a slow retreat, pleading for arbitration of each point at issue, with the Governor as their favored umpire. As the national elections were held on the first day of the strike the Governor kept his mind open to argument and pressure from business and on the third day of the walk-out he banned all crowds and implied that the militia would be summoned if the strike continued. As a result the Labor Committee called off the strike at two in the morning of November 11.

Thanks to the aid of a public minded citizen, Mr. W. S. Parkerson, a formula was achieved that enabled both sides to settle after two days of argument. "The Triple Alliance gained its original demands — a ten-hour day, overtime pay and adjusted wage schedules."²⁰ No union was recognized by name and no one raised the issue of the preferential union shop.

Workers were returned to their respective jobs, if they were still open. The thankless burden upon the Labor Committee, after the strike ended, was to find jobs for many a blacklisted striker.

To expect any other ending of a general strike in a Southern city in a period when a Homestead and a Pullman strike could take place in the North and West, with all the violence involved and with too much at stake for industry to permit any union victory, was most unrealistic. Something of this view must have motivated the Labor Committee when it continued to postpone the outbreak of the general strike, and when it finally called off the dispute.

1910 in Philadelphia: Politics and Brotherly Love

Once again a general strike broke on a surprised public as if the genus had never before appeared in the United States. Said Current Literature in April 1910: "Last month the city of Philadelphia contributed something entirely new to American history. The 'general strike' is a well known phase of industrial warfare in Europe, but it has been left to the City of Brotherly Love to inaugurate it here."²¹

Politics were thoroughly entangled in the Philadelphia strike of 1910. Because the city's traction company refused to make terms with their employees the general cessation of work hit the city, the State Federation of Labor pledged itself to spread the strike to "every industry in the State" and threatened to extend it to nation-wide importance. The traction company was a product of mergers, a holding company accused of "watering" its stocks. On this company's Board of Directors were three representatives of the city, one of which was the Mayor. In a contract between the company and the city in 1907 the company bound itself to turn over to the city all earnings above a stipulated amount; the city, in exchange, to be the guardian of the company.

In June 1909 a street car strike occurred which greatly embarrassed the city's Republican machine, which wanted the votes of workers in trade unions affiliated with the A. F. L.'s Central Labor Union. Yet the machine, in office, was "the guardian" of the traction company, as per agreement of 1907. The company refused to yield to the strikers until one day before the primaries, when the Republican political boss of the city warned the company that no police guards would ride on

the street cars to give protection against the strikers. Reluctantly the company yielded; the political machine was saved. A contract was signed with the transit workers, which was to lapse in June 1910.²²

The political tangle was even more complicated. Two years previously John J. Murphy had been candidate for the presidency of the Central Labor Union, then composed of some 200 union locals. The Republican political boss approached Murphy and inquired "what size collar he wore." Murphy's dramatic reply was that he didn't wear any size of collar. Thereupon the machine put up another candidate for head of the C. L. U. The police took a hand with the C. L. U. election, throwing out many Murphy voters and cracking a few heads. Murphy was declared defeated but the national leaders of the A. F. L. declared Murphy elected and the local "boss's" candidate stepped down.²³

In the meantime a new (company?) union had been formed, the Keystone, which gained a membership of some 2,000 out of the 7,000 employed by the traction company. Thus began a fight for survival by the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees against the "Keystone" union. Conferences for a new contract, due in June 1910, were held and the men asked for a wage increase to 25¢ an hour, together with a preferential union shop. Conferences suddenly ended, February 8, when the Company dismissed 173 employees (the union said 600) for "dishonesty or evasion of duty" according to the Company, but "prominence in the union" as the workers themselves explained it.

Street-car Strike

A strike was immediately declared. The Philadelphia Rapid Transit alleged that 4,000 employees walked out; the union claimed 6,200. In the very first 48 hours of the strike there was great disorder. Cars were burned and police were injured by mobs. By Sunday night the P. R. T. reported that 300 cars had been wrecked.²⁴ The Company demanded the right to deal with its own employees directly. It wanted no "outsiders," contending that it had as much right to hire and fire as the workers had to take or reject a job on the P. R. T. The strikers held that the company forced the strike in order to cancel the agreement long before June; that what gave the Company courage was the knowledge that the city government had pledged

itself to be "a friend, ally and agent."²⁵ The police were helpless to stop the mobs from wrecking the cars and stoning the crews. Since the car control boxes were damaged or destroyed it was evident that whoever did the damage had no intention of permitting the cars to run for quite a while. In the first two days of the strike more intense bitterness was expressed against the Company than at any time in the strike of the previous year. An eight-year old boy was killed with the stones thrown by the mobs and the police were forced to fire into the mobs. Murphy of the Central Labor Union had threatened a general strike if the Company used strikebreakers or policemen to run the cars.²⁶

C. O. Pratt, national organizer of the carmen, who repeatedly warned his followers not to resort to violence, was arrested for incitement to riot, but his arrest was denounced by many business men as a grave police blunder and he was released in \$3,000 bail. On the same day five carloads of strikebreakers reached the city and were escorted to the car-barns by the police, and for weeks the Company stubbornly refused to accept mediation, no matter from what source.

As the days passed the situation became more tense. February 24 found the mobs awed by the State Constabulary, and Organizer Pratt still convinced that a general strike was not needed. Nevertheless, the leaders of organized labor not affiliated with the Central Labor Union were invited to a conference Sunday, February 27, "when it was intended to fix a time for calling out the workers."²⁷ Friday saw the directors of the P. R. T. definitely reject a suggestion of arbitration, proposed by the city clergy. In reply Murphy of the C. L. U. pledged that the general strike would be called Sunday if the P. R. T. dispute were not settled by that day. Pratt had accepted the idea of arbitration for the car men's union but had suggested that a representative of labor should sit on the arbitration board. Because of his threat that bloodshed would follow if a single striker were shot by the State Constabulary, Murphy was arrested and then released in \$3,000 bail. Pratt admitted that Murphy's arrest made the general strike inevitable.²⁸

Labor Votes the General Strike

Sunday the 27th of February was a day of struggle within the ranks of labor. One hundred twenty-two delegates gathered to decide upon the issue of the general strike. There was

substantial agreement among the C. L. U. unions in favor of the strike call. A few conservatives, however, held that as "arbitration was in the air" precipitate action should be opposed. A general strike would involve many broken contracts and that should be avoided if possible. The delegates were profoundly dissatisfied with this suggestion of postponing the general strike call. They declared it would arouse doubt in the public mind as to labor's sincerity, would give many contractors time to bring in strikebreakers, and thus weaken any ultimate general strike action. Rumor passed around that Gompers had asked for delay. It was Pratt, however, who in the end convinced the audience of delegates that delay was the wiser course. The final decision was to favor the general strike call, but to defer the date until Saturday, March 5, to give arbitration a chance.²⁹

March 1 saw strenuous efforts by leading business men such as Ellis Gimbel and Jacob Lit to get a settlement negotiated. Most interests in the city were supporting the idea of arbitration, and enormous pressure was brought to bear upon the P. R. T. directors.³⁰ Mayor Rayburn, one of the three city representatives on the Board of Directors of the P. R. T., had expressed his determination to leave the Republican Party if he were forced to accept arbitration for the P. R. T.³¹ On the second of March the United Business Men's Association, claiming some 12,000 members, held an extended meeting with President Charles Kruger of the P. R. T. and Mayor Rayburn, but without any success. The business men had suggested the use of an old law by which a nine-member board (three each for labor and the company, three appointed by the Courts) would arbitrate the differences.³² The P. R. T. refused to appeal to the Courts in this manner, and stated that they were ready to take back the majority of the strikers; that they would recognize a grievance committee whereon men who had stayed at work would have equal representation with those who had struck. The strikers rejected this solution; the general strike was set for Friday at midnight.³³

The Committee of Ten

It was announced that the strike action would not last just for a day or two but was to be a "fight to a finish." The conduct of the general strike was to be under guidance of the Committee of Ten, on which body there were no representatives of the car men's union, for whom the general strike had been called.³⁴

The Committee of Ten laid down their minimum demand; reinstatement by the P. R. T. of all strikers; the choice of an arbitrator by both company and union and a third member to be picked by those two; all issues to be submitted to those three men. The Committee called for a great demonstration in Independence Square. The authorities gave notice that they would prevent it. The Committee predicted that the general strike would spread to other cities if the car men did not get what they demanded - 25c an hour and the preferential union shop.³⁵

The big parade took place despite the Mayor's ban; was orderly but noisy, and ended at the Central Labor Hall. On the outskirts of the city P. R. T. cars were again attacked, and the mobs were charged by police. At the car barns the strike-breakers fought the Negro police who were sent to protect them. The New York Times, in comment on the general strike asserted: "Industrial paralysis threatens the city. . . . Union labor and its strength is now on trial. . . . Never in the United States has such a far-reaching sympathetic strike been called as a weapon to insist upon the recognition of a union."³⁶ The usual exemptions from the strike did not occur at the very outset; as the Times reported, the unions which ceased work included the milk-drivers and fruit teamsters, "after their morning deliveries," and it implied that they "would not return to work until the general strike was called off."³⁷ This was not the whole story, however, as a subsequent issue of the same paper indicated that strike headquarters were exempting unions that served the public with necessities like milk, ice, bread, etc.³⁸

Tension Grows

By Sunday evening, March 6, there was intense anxiety in both camps. Riots followed a quiet day and a woman was killed. The Committee of Ten claimed that 150,000 workers were out; the police put the figure at 30,000. Both statements should be taken with caution. The heart of the strike area was the Kensington district in which were located most of the textile mills. Newark, N. J., Central Labor Union sent word that if the P. R. T. dispute were not settled by Tuesday night a general strike would break out there.³⁹ Both sides were putting their best window dressing before the public. The P. R. T. announced that they would show the city that they did not have to wait for anyone; that they would hire men and that the striking employees could not return. Meanwhile union groups visited the homes of non-union

workers, trying to persuade them to join a union and support the general strike. The Committee of Ten took steps to prevent unauthorized speakers from inciting to riot, in the various official meetings held around the city. In a meeting of allied German trades some 7,000 German workers voted to stay away from work for a while.⁴⁰

Memory of last-minute intervention by the city political machine in the transit strike of 1909 probably gave Pratt confidence that a settlement would again be made, without resort to a general strike. But this time the intervention came, not so much from the city boss, who had been in Florida, as from the State political leader, Senator Penrose; and then it came too late. But before this transpired efforts had been made by labor to spread the general strike all over the state of Pennsylvania. As the days passed and the general strike call failed to bring out anything like the numbers expected and claimed by the strike leaders, the latter began to fear it might turn into a boomerang. The New York Times reported the strike leaders were highly gratified, claiming 125,000 out, with another 25,000 still to come. The Police, however, put the numbers out at around 18,000 out of over 175,000. Meanwhile 1,000 trolley cars were reported running and the power houses were functioning.⁴¹

Threat of State-wide Strike

On Wednesday, March 9, the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor, in convention, pledged to their Philadelphia colleagues a sympathetic strike in every industry in the State. Mahon, International President of the car men's union, was wildly cheered when he told the delegates that the only way to force the P. R. T. to its senses was a national general strike. Plainly the meeting had been stampeded by Mahon's speech and the presence of the Philadelphia delegates, because before their arrival President Greenawalt of the State Federation had declared against even a State-wide general strike.⁴²

Before any further State-wide action took place more time elapsed. An effort was made to hold a mass meeting in the Ball Park, but this was banned by the police. The parade, therefore, went round town and suddenly headed for the City Hall, shouting "We'll hang Mayor Raeburn on a Sour Apple Tree," with the resultant press headlines the next morning: "Frenzied Mobs fight Police." Desperate efforts were made

by organizations of business men and bankers to get the National Civic Federation to intervene; the reply was "no intervention unless both sides request it."⁴³

Though 140,000 strikers were claimed by March 13, the situation had become so serious that the strike leaders ordered exempted workers, such as bakers, milkmen and grocery clerks, to stay away from work until there was a settlement with the P. R. T. This was a direct answer by the Strike Committee to the statement of sympathy with the P. R. T. by city bankers. One day later President Kruger of the P. R. T. and President Mahon of the Amalgamated (the Transit union) met for the first time in conference, after which Mahon reported to the Committee of Ten. As with earlier attempts this effort also failed.⁴⁴

On March 15 President Greenawalt called on all State unions to take a vote on the general strike issue. The next day the Committee of Ten announced that President Greenawalt would call a State-wide General Strike on Monday, March 21.⁴⁵ It was at this critical point that Senator Penrose and the city's political leader, State Senator McNichol, met with the Directors of the P. R. T. The tale of this meeting is dramatically told in an editorial in the Independent:

For once the power of a boss has been justified. The long and bitter strike of the trolley car men in Philadelphia may be settled, and settled very fairly, and mainly in favor of the men, but not by conference between the men and the corporation — that was hopeless; and not by any committee of clergymen — they amounted to nothing; and not by any influence of the Mayor or any imposing committee of leading citizens; but by the imperious will of the State boss, Senator Penrose. He came down from Washington, summoned the officers of the company, smote the table with his fist, and told them they must yield, and do it immediately and completely, or he would smash their whole concern... He could control the State Legislature and the Philadelphia Common Council. They saw the point and they capitulated most unwillingly. So far, all well. But the way it was done is most humiliating. Must Philadelphia have a dictator? Must such a dispute be settled by a political boss?... Nevertheless, we thank you, Senator Penrose, for using a giant's

strength so usefully. But can you make the men accept your will? We shall see.⁴⁶

Political Intervention Fails

That last question was both pointed and poignant. The city and State "bosses" conferred with President Mahon and the Committee of Ten. The terms ran as follows: All men to go back without discrimination, with regular runs as soon as possible; the 173 dismissed men to have their cases decided by arbitration; the men's right to form separate unions or none at all. Any group to have the right to present grievances; the wage to be 23c per hour, gradually raised to 25c; the workers' right to wear a union badge — but not too big. The Committee of Ten decided that these terms were such that the union could not accept them.⁴⁷ This meant that a state-wide general strike was once again on the docket.

Then the blows fell. The sympathy strikers were deserting by March 22; Philadelphia bricklayers were ready to go back to work, P. R. T. or no P. R. T. The textile strikers had been ordered back to work. The Executive Committee of the State Federation of Labor met in Wilkes-Barre to take action on the general strike, but failed to come to any conclusion. They claimed that the issue had been affected by the return to work of the Philadelphia textile workers. The general strike, they stated, was a "remedy too drastic for any but a last resort." President Greenawalt would not release the actual vote on the general strike by the State unions. Finally Pratt declared it better to get the sympathy strikers back to work and have them give financial aid to the P. R. T. strikers.⁴⁸ Thus, after three weeks, the general strike was called off, Sunday, March 27, 1910, after one of the most violent and savage examples of class struggle in the history of American cities.⁴⁹

Public Attitudes

Certain curious facts developed during the transit and the general strikes. In the first place the people of Philadelphia had a dislike of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit almost amounting to hatred.⁵⁰ The case was put in scathing terms:⁵¹ "To sympathize with a strike against the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company seems to be the only form of moral indignation of which the civic consciousness of Philadelphia is capable." The public hatred of the transit company did not mean sympathy

for the transit strikers: "In almost any section of the city a crowd will gather quickly and cheer the burning of a trolley car, and in the next breath condemn the strikers for tying up traffic."⁵² A second point that appeared as the strikers proceeded was the deep suspicion of the whole industrial and business world by the organized workers. Charles Pratt, leader of the car men's strike, but not a resident of Philadelphia, referring to the general strike, contended:

In this city a republican form of government no longer exists. We have, instead, a judicial monarchy. . . . It is true that we have had contracts, and that we have broken them to the hurt of friendly employers. They suffer, and we regret it. . . . We must stop every wheel in every industry in the city. They are seeking to destroy us. The Manufacturers' Association of the country stands behind the Transit Company with all the power and wealth and political influence, and they mean that organized labor shall be wiped out in this city.⁵³

Another writer in sympathy with labor declares that the general strike in Philadelphia was political, and that it came because the city officials were in league with the company officials to break the strike.⁵⁴ He comments: "The seat of war was at the City Hall. The plans of campaign were mapped out at the desks of the mayor and the director of public safety and carried into effect through orders issued by them."⁵⁵ The Nation quotes from an editorial in the Cleveland Leader, a "dyed-in-the-wool Republican organ," which put the case as follows:⁵⁶ "For the last quarter-century and longer Philadelphia has endured the tyranny of a monstrosly corrupt and shameless municipal machine. . . . It has been inevitable that corruption should be foul the public service corporations and poison their relations with the city government."

Conclusions

No snap judgment brought the general strike to Philadelphia in 1910. It was under serious consideration for several days before it was voted upon by the city's unions. Even then the opening date was delayed in the hope that arbitration might be accepted at the eleventh hour by the P. R. T. and the Mayor. Perhaps the most reluctant labor leader to have the strike called

was the man for whose union the whole body of city labor was prepared to make sacrifice of wage and job security. Only when the C. L. U. President Murphy had been arrested and released in \$3,000 bail, did Charles Pratt of the Amalgamated finally agree to have the general strike called. Even then it was probably with the belief that the strike order would bring the political intervention that had occurred in the preceding year.

The Committee of Ten which called, conducted and called off the general strike consisted of union representatives largely of the craft type, and therefore, less likely to be carried away by the ideology of the general strike as a ready labor weapon. On the other hand, Cohen claims two of the Committee of Ten were avowed socialists and that "socialist philosophy tintured the whole movement."⁵⁷

Be that as it may, the Committee of Ten lost little time in exempting from the strike call sundry important occupations and services considered essential to the public welfare, such as bakers, milkmen, icemen, grocery clerks and similar trades. Nor were these exemptions cancelled until near the end of the general strike, and then the order to quit work was not widely obeyed by those involved. Perhaps the gravest result of the order cancelling exemptions was the walkout of some 400 grocery clerks on March 15.⁵⁸

In short, despite the wide mob action against the cars, their unhappy crews and unfortunate passengers, the Committee of Ten and the ranks of organized labor were far from indifferent to the needs of the general public. Far less indifferent, one suspects, than was the average citizen of Philadelphia to the fate of 7,000 Transit employees or to the deep slough of political corruption into which the City of Brotherly Love had allowed itself to slip. To no small degree the citizens themselves were to blame for their plight when the general strike hit Philadelphia.

PART II

THE GENERAL STRIKE IN PRACTICE Economic, Political, Revolutionary

CHAPTER IV

SWEDEN IN 1909

Each year weeks and months of snow drift on to Alpine heights, piling up tons of material on the upper levels. Comes the spring sun and the dangerous mass is ready at the faint piping of a village lad to start an appalling avalanche down the mountain sides. What is the cause of the fearsome avalanche? The winter's snow, the driving winds that piled it on the mountain sides, or the boy's shrill music that appeared to release the mad rush of the snow-slide?

It is the same with the origin of a general strike. One can easily identify the asserted causes that triggered the actual struggle, but no student of labor can rest content with so superficial an analysis. To fathom the deeper causes of an effective walk-out a modicum of history in each case is necessary.

In the case of Sweden there is a long story of close relations between the Labor movement and the Social Democrat Party. It is not surprising, therefore, that Sweden's first general strike was not economic but strictly political, being a demonstration for universal suffrage, in 1902. Yet it was this relatively effective political strike that started the "snow-drifts" which ended in the economic strike of 1909. There is no question that the orderly and well-organized political strike startled the people, and not least the business men of Sweden. It wakened Swedish employers to their seriously unprepared condition on the economic level.

From 1902 dates the establishment of the Swedish Employers' Association with its powerful constituent federations of employers in Foundries and Ironworks, in Textiles and in Sawmills. The centralized power of the new Employers' Association can be seen in Article 23 of its statutes, which required that every employer-member's contract with a labor organization must first receive approval of the Association. It is further indicated by the fact that by 1909 its membership had jumped from one hundred employers to over fourteen hundred, and its accumulated fighting funds from two million kronor to over seventeen millions.

From 1895 to 1902 the forces of Swedish organized labor had had it mainly their own way. Out of some 490 strikes the unions had won 243, the employers 63, with mutual concessions in the

remainder. Labor, by the close of 1908, had 2,400 current collective contracts with nearly 10,000 employers, covering 325,000 workers. Prosperity and growing productivity per man-hour had aided labor in its achievement of economic power. In the meantime the Employers' Association had obtained from labor in the most recent contracts the right to cease work (or to lock-out) before the termination of contracts, provided the respective superior organizations of capital or labor approved such action. By 1909, therefore, organized management had won nation-wide similarity of contracts and the right to turn the general strike weapon against the workers in the form of a general lock-out. (Today, in the United States, a hot debate rages on the propriety of nation-wide collective bargaining, because of the alleged power it gives to labor.)

The era in which management had been accustomed to yield concessions in order to win continued economic peace was rapidly ending, along with a protracted period of prosperity. This rapid and drastic change in the economic balance of power was not recognized by the workers in the ranks. The central executive of the Swedish National Federation of Labor (Sveriges Landsorganisation) was in an increasingly untenable position. Local unions and the occupational federations to which they belonged were self-governing up to the point of being able to declare a strike. After that they were apt to turn to the National Federation for financial and moral support, even though the National Federation had been given little or no part in the events leading up to that strike decision. Now in 1909, when the psychological moment arrived, labor's executives found themselves faced with popular worker excitement no longer possible to control save by yielding to the demand for complete cessation of work in a general strike, in retaliation against the lock-out technique of the Swedish Employers' Association.

The immediate and direct causes of the Swedish general strike of 1909 were relatively minor in character. They included the insistent demands by the labor ranks for higher wages, despite the increasing depression. This demand was particularly emphatic where new machinery had resulted in greater output without an accompanying increase in the labor force. Another complaint against labor by the Employers' Association was the alleged lack of respect for established agreements, even where those agreements had been approved by their superior organizations. On its side labor protested the cumulative use of the

lock-out weapon.

Underlying these genuinely economic demands were certain basic urges on both sides. The Employers' Association had fashioned a new and powerful weapon of defense and was eager to use it. Employers had chafed under the continued loss to labor of "management's prerogatives." Under Article 23 of the Association's statutes employers were to obtain in all their labor contracts the right to hire and fire without union interference. To force labor's acceptance of this unwelcome clause the Association had threatened a general lock-out in 1908. The National Federation of Labor was compelled under this threat to accept a compromise: if workers believed that this clause had been used to attack union liberty, an investigation had first to be made by the labor organizations involved before any other step (a strike, for instance) could be taken.

In 1909 the Association finally brought matters to a head. It declared a partial lock-out for July 5 (104 employers, 12,700 workers), to be followed by a total lock-out on August 2, if the remaining strike issues had not been settled in accord with the conditions of the Association, especially those involved in Article 23. Thus, by direct challenge from the Employers' Association, the Federation at the eleventh hour was compelled to take full part in a struggle wherein both sides had already established their respective positions, but in which the Federation had had little decision. Despite the efforts of the nation's conciliators, delegates of the Federation, in special conference, called a general strike for August 4. To the public they announced that this was a battle to save the right of the worker to be consulted in matters concerning conditions of work. For labor, as for capital, this struggle had become one of the prestige of their respective organizations, and to that extent had ceased to be purely economic. The attitude of management, moreover, greatly intensified the feeling of class solidarity of the strikers, who included thousands of unorganized workers.

Underlying this rather class-conscious struggle for prestige was the anomaly of centralized responsibility of organized labor at the same time that it practiced a statutory, strongly localized autonomy. This inevitably meant a conflict between the labor ranks and their leaders, with the latter leaning back against the growing pressure of the ranks, even under the peril of being accused of feathering their own nests. At the final challenge, therefore, the National Federation of Labor could not avoid the

show-down of the general strike without completely destroying labor's unity and losing face before the employers, the public and the ranks of the workers themselves.

This strike of 1909 is not only important as being the best organized on both sides up to that time, but it has been very well written up and documented. The Swedish Department of Labor made an exhaustive study of this dispute and not only published a four-volume report but also an abridged translation into French, which has been utilized in this book.¹ This great struggle lasted for a whole month and 300,000 out of a half million workers employed in industry or transportation obeyed the strike order. Both parties opposed arbitration, were confident of winning. In the end labor surrendered, virtually without conditions. On July 26 the Employers' Association locked out workers in the textile and sawmilling industries, and on August 2 the iron works and foundries followed suit. By this time 400 employers were involved and 72,000 workers. Of these less than half were affiliated with the National Federation of Labor, the rest being unorganized. In the textile industry very few were union members yet the provocative actions of the employers had brought about an abandonment of work that was all but universal, in the industries affected by the lock-outs.

Organized labor's delegates, called into special conference, recognizing that the National Federation and most of its constituent federations were already almost drained of funds for strike-pay, still felt it wiser not to split the movement by further concessions to management, but to declare a general strike as of August 4, if the dispute had not been settled by that time, and the lock-outs called off. Important exceptions to the strike call were care of the sick, tending of animals (few autos at that date), sewerage, lighting and water services. All out of work payments were to cease when the general strike started. The non-socialist press asserted that the call for a general strike was a sign of labor weakness and that the strike would inevitably collapse.

The urgent need for a single powerful control of the strike at once reduced the self-governing powers of the separate industrial federations. Their sole task now was to get the strike ratified by each of their local unions. From then on the locals were dependent upon the local strike committees and the General Secretary's office of the National Federation. Thus the National Federation of Labor assumed control never before

obtained, a power that might well have enabled the avoidance of the general strike had the National Federation possessed it earlier.

In each locality a strike committee was to be established, to carry out the decisions of the General Secretary of the National Federation. These committees had the following duties:

To keep strikers informed.

To organize meetings when needed.

To deliver special exemption permits.

To guard carefully over the maintenance of order.

To keep in close touch with the office of the General Secretary.

That this dispute had no intentional revolutionary purpose is clear from the instructions given to the local strike committees. They were to cooperate with the police, provide them with special labor volunteers who would bear insignia showing their function, and such "specials" were to conform scrupulously to the instruction of the police.

A second indication that the National Federation and the local strike committees did not intend the dispute to be of a revolutionary character was the strong and repeated demand in the strike proclamation that there must be "no act of violence." From the beginning to the end of the first month of the struggle the conduct of the strikers was admirable. Says T. H. Penson "Even when savings were exhausted and hunger had in many instances been a daily experience, there was little open murmuring and no violence."² The constant repetition of the strike leaders that there must be no disturbance, the excellent cooperation of the special labor police with the regular police force and the almost complete stoppage of liquor sales, all contributed to a high degree of public order.

That the strike enhanced what class solidarity there had been can be seen not only from the labor and socialist press, and from the thousands of unorganized workers who participated sympathetically in the walk-out, but also from the stern discipline with which the ranks of the employers were kept in line, their individual labor contracts supervised, and their monetary deposits forfeited if strict obedience to the Employers' Association were not rendered. In reality neither party cared too much for the outside public, except in so far as public opinion might be coerced into supporting one side or the other in the

struggle. The original strike proclamation by the Federation of Labor was worded in reasonable terms. Only when the labor press began to expand on the text of the official statement did it appear that the conflict would emphasize the class struggle aspect.

Three important groups of labor, not members of the federations composing the National Federation of Labor, were outside the field of the general strike order. None of the three, railroad workers, printers and postal servants were affected by the lock-outs ordered by the Employers' Association. Most railroadmen were government servants, with wages and pensions dependent upon length of service. The government had made it clear that any man who quit work would lose his pension and his seniority. As only one-sixth of the organized rail workers voted for the strike, the Federation of Labor wisely declared that the rail workers could help best by financial aid. In fact the rail workers and the postal servants played a most important part in the orderly strength of the long strike, as they kept the National labor executives in easy and constant touch with the outlying districts. Without this channel of communication the strike would have crumbled and violence might well have occurred in isolated areas.

The printers were quite another story. The Swedish Typographers' Union had in its contract a no-strike clause. The printers appealed to their General Union of Master-Printers, asking them to allow suspension of the no-strike clause, in accord with many other employers' organizations, especially the Employers' Association. The request the Master-Printers refused, whereupon though it meant breaking their contract, the typographers agreed to strike on August 9, asserting that existence of the labor movement was at stake. The only paper allowed to print by the Federation was a national daily, containing only strike news, called Svaret (The Answer). Newspapers of a sort continued, to the surprise of the pickets. They were first produced by the editorial staffs. Shortly thereafter enough amateur compositors were available to get out minimum editions. None could compete with Svaret's 150,000 copies that spread over the nation daily.

In the first flush of the strike the "crossed arms" technique seemed to have been victorious. Street traffic almost ceased, even milk cart drivers joined the strike. A few trams appeared in some cities driven by the company officials or engineers of the companies. In some cases the street-car passengers were

paid for acting as a "stage army." For transportation of the sick or the dead the driver had to obtain a strike committee permit or a Red Cross flag. Strike figures were carefully observed and recorded by the government. The first four weeks of the strike showed successive data (in thousands) of 290, 278, 255 and 239 out on strike.

The large numbers of workers, organized and unorganized, who joined the strike, the effort to pull in the railroadmen, the typographers, the agricultural workers (at harvest time), and the gravediggers of Northern Stockholm, roused the public to the need for some form of citizens' committee. The outcome was the creation of a Public Security Brigade, to aid in running the essential services. Noblemen and high military officers drove cabs, merchants and stockbrokers did ambulance work, civil engineers worked in the stokehold of a steamer, kept the gas, water and electric light plants running (with the aid of the army), undergraduates acted as street-car conductors or unloaded ships bringing provisions to the capital.

Halfway through August the non-Socialist Swedish Workers' Federation allowed their members to return to work. Their explanation for desertion of the other strikers was that the National Federation had encouraged workers to break contracts and so had turned the protest strike into an attack on the whole community. The Employers' Association offered easier terms to these returning workers than they did to the members of the National Federation. No effort was made by the government to mediate until the general strike was called off. After a month of the strike the National Federation of Labor made an agreement with many industry heads who were not members of the Swedish Employers' Association. Thus on September 5 the general strike ended, but the original struggle with the Employers' Association continued. Even two months after the start of the general strike only 30 per cent of the workers employed by the Employers' Association had returned to work, so strong was their feeling. Not until the middle of November did it seem wise to the Employers' Association to put an end to this "state of war," and the lock-out was called off, including the particular foundry which started the whole trouble. In textiles, sawmills, clothing and some other industries the lock-out lasted, despite public disapproval, until mid-December.

Thus ended in bitter failure the Swedish effort to use the weapon of the economic general strike. Unlike the political strike

of 1902 this was a struggle by the workers for economic purposes. Because of this character and because the issue of class struggle in place of class cooperation was made evident to the public, labor lacked the wide sympathetic support which had been given by the public to the political strike of seven years before. Regardless of the persistence with which the numbers of the strikers stayed high, they found themselves after the very first few days growing weaker each day. As the strike continued the public grew calmer and less willing to intervene, save to keep the essential services running. Many workers were severely penalized for breaking their contracts, losing their seniority when State or municipal employees. The printers suffered a deduction from their weekly wages as a guarantee against future strikes. If a typographical worker quit work irregularly those wage deductions were then forfeited. Yet the workers did not learn that to run an effective labor movement there must be subordination to a central power exercising some control over each constituent organization. Perhaps one cannot be too surprised at the failure of the Swedish workers at that time to learn that lesson, for the employers themselves failed to grasp the idea that the general lock-out was just as unsocial a weapon as the general strike.

Perhaps the most important lesson was learned by the non-striking citizens of Sweden. They found that while the advent of the machine had created the problem of the half-skilled "proletariat" it had also made it increasingly possible to utilize both the partially-trained citizen and the specialized expert in the organized "Public Security Brigade," "Technische Nothilfe," "Organization for the Maintenance of Supplies," or "Citizens' Committee." With the aid of such an organization the national or local authorities are much more able to withstand the immediate pressure of a general strike — and time gained is everything gained. Time is on the side of the existing government.

CHAPTER V

SEATTLE AND WINNIPEG IN 1919*

Post-War Strike Fever

Despite the three American general strikes already recorded above, the citizens of Seattle seemed to have faced their general strike in 1919 as if it were the very first example of that weapon in America. How the newspaper men could have completely forgotten the most recent upheaval in Philadelphia, in 1910, is rather hard to understand, especially as that strike was so ridden with violence. The general strike in Seattle, early in February 1919, lasted only six days, whereas that in Winnipeg in May and June of the same year endured for six grim weeks. In Seattle there was no violence; in Winnipeg only in the last days, when the strike leaders had been arrested and held in the penitentiary without bail. In both instances the atmosphere was electric, if only because the Russian Soviet Revolution had occurred barely two years previously and Americans were none too sure how resistant to Communist blandishments American labor might be.

In both cities the general strike was a sympathy strike following an appeal from the metal workers' trade unions for aid in their own disputes. Hours of labor and wage rates were the basic issue in Seattle, and the principle of collective bargaining in Winnipeg. In both cases the strike was called by existing craft unions, with the consent of the local Central Labor Council, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, but against the advice of the A. F. L. "top brass." In each city the presence of "foreigners" and "radicals" was alleged by the press and the employers, and in each case the strike was contested by the citizens under the belief that it was but a forerunner of a revolution. Labor, of course, denied this allegation, and the orderliness of labor in the strike was remarkable in Seattle, and in

* The author is particularly desirous that this book shall carry the full story of the general strike in America. The original text that covered Seattle and Winnipeg in 1919 is now out of print. The author, therefore, has not hesitated to draw heavily upon those sections in that book. Occasional additions have been made in recognition of new and recent material.

Winnipeg until near the end. In neither city was the strike won but in neither did the outcome seem complete defeat to the labor ranks.¹

Like many another Western city Seattle had grown from a small township to a city of over three hundred thousand population in a single generation. During the first World War Seattle's shipyards were responsible for over a quarter of the ships built for the U. S. Shipping Board. The general strike developed from a wage dispute of the shipyard workers. During the war the shipyards operated on a basis of collective bargaining between the Metal Trades Council of Seattle, composed of twenty-one separate crafts unions, and the various shipyard owners. The separate unions no longer negotiated contracts but a "blanket agreement" was made by the Metal Trades Council. This was precisely what the Winnipeg Metal Trades desired but had not achieved.

Trouble in the Seattle Shipyards

In December 1917 the Macy Board was established for the settlement of shipyard disputes. The Board fixed wage rates, adherence to which was insisted upon by the Emergency Fleet Corporation on the part of any of its contractors. The Macy Board ruled that there was to be no discrimination between union and non-union labor. Some shipyards, such as the Skinner and Eddy Corporation, ignored this rule and continued to run a union shop.² The wage rates fixed by the Macy Board caused much discontent in Seattle. In practice they gave sixty cents daily more wages to certain crafts than had been requested. They also reduced the wage rate of others twenty-two cents a day under what was received in other parts of Seattle. In wartime no action was taken but after the Armistice many appeals against the Macy Award brought no result. A referendum on the feasibility of a strike followed. A majority of the crafts and of the total workers involved was held to be the green light for a strike. On January 21, 1919, this strike was called for the shipbuilding plants in Seattle, Tacoma and Aberdeen.³

The Metal Trades workers demanded a wage of \$8.00 per day for mechanics, with a graded scale according to skill, down to \$5.50 a day for laborers, with an eight-hour day and a forty-hour week. Many of the skilled men were already receiving more than the minimum demanded, but they advocated a strike for the sake of the less skilled laborers who had found the cost

of living well nigh prohibitive. The shipyard owners, on the other hand, while willing to grant advances to the skilled men, were hostile to any increase for the lower paid laborers. On January 24 the shipbuilders telegraphed the Emergency Fleet Corporation that "the workmen's demands were so unreasonable that it would be impossible to think of negotiating with them." Two days later the Skinner and Eddy Corporation wired Director Charles Piez that "the majority of the workmen did not favor the strike but were forced into it by radical leaders whose real desire was to disrupt the whole organization of society."⁴ That the rumor of radical leaders who forced reluctant men to strike had started some days before the general strike is evident from this telegram. If anything is clear, however, from the data available, it is that the ranks forced the pace, and were less willing to call off the strike, when the time came, than their allegedly radical leaders.

Events moved swiftly, once the 35,000 shipyard workers ceased work. On the evening of January 22, the Central Labor Council, consisting of representatives from all the city's trade unions, received a request from the Metal Trades Council that a general strike be called in Seattle and Tacoma in sympathy with the shipyard workers. The request was approved by the Central Labor Council and referred to the constituent unions for a vote of their membership. A week later, so many unions had given a strike vote, that a General Strike Committee was formed made up of three delegates from each union willing to participate in the strike, and a meeting was called for Sunday, February 2. Many of the unions voting to take part did so even at the imminent risk of losing hard won gains of previous years.⁵

The Threat of the General Strike

By the second day of February, 1919, the general public became aware of the imminent peril that threatened their city. If a general strike actually started no one knew how it would end. Moreover, the Russian revolution had made the ordinary citizen, not well acquainted with the ranks of American labor, see Bolshevism in every large-scale strike. Business men took out riot insurance on their property; householders laid in heavy stocks of groceries; hardware stores unearthed lamp supplies and sold them at a considerable profit; the press alternately appealed to the workers not to ruin their city and threatened them with penalties if Bolshevism showed its head.

Extra-legal was the extraordinary weapon by which more than by any other... the alleged revolutionary plot to overthrow government through the general strike was discovered and countered. This was the Minute Men, an organization doing and supplementing the work of the American Protective League in Washington. In the state it had 100,000 members, 2,500 of whom were specially trustworthy investigators.

There were Minute Men who were already members of labor bodies and in a position to learn the inner purposes of men behind the strike. There were Minute Men in every bank... while I sat in the office of the organization photographs were brought in of checks signed by the officers of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Council. The Minute Men used professional pickpockets, an official told me, to go through a public meeting of protest against the invasion of Russia, to discover how many men were armed. Legitimate labor even claimed that the organization was using the agent provocateur. I did not believe this until an official of the Minute Men told me, in the course of his description of the revolutionary character of the Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Council meetings, "We had a man on the committee that drew up the constitution of the Council, and when he got through they had a document that would have sent to the penitentiary any man who put his name to it!"⁶

One of the pieces of evidence repeatedly adduced as proof of this intended "revolution" was an editorial published on February 5, the day before the general strike started, in the Seattle Union Record, the local labor daily. Certain of the paragraphs that gave greatest offense follow.

We are undertaking the most tremendous move ever made by Labor in this country, a move which will lead — no one knows where!! Labor will feed the people. Twelve great kitchens have been offered, and from them food will be distributed by the provision trades at low cost to all.

Labor will care for the babies and the sick. The milk-wagon drivers and the laundry drivers are arranging plans for supplying milk to babies, invalids and hospitals, and taking care of the cleaning of linen for hospitals.

Labor will preserve order. The strike committee is arranging for guards, and it is expected that the stopping of cars will keep people at home. A few hot-headed enthusiasts have complained that strikers only should be fed, and the general public left to endure severe discomfort. Aside from the inhumanitarian character of such suggestions, let them get this straight. Not the withdrawal of labor power, but the power of the strikers to manage will win this strike.

Labor will not only shut down the industries, but labor will reopen, under the management of the appropriate trades, such activities as are needed to preserve public health and public peace. If the strike continues, labor may feel led to avoid public suffering by reopening more and more activities, under its own management.

And that is why we say that we are starting on a road that leads — no one knows where!

Mayor Ole Hanson, himself of Norwegian ancestry, made much of this editorial in his self-advertising campaign as the Knight who slew the Red Dragon. In his statement to the United Press, for consumption outside of his own city, Mayor Hanson declared that "the so-called sympathetic Seattle strike was an attempted revolution. That there was no violence does not alter the fact. . . . The intent, openly and covertly announced, was for the overthrow of the industrial system; here first, then everywhere. . . . True there were no flashing guns, no bombs, no killings. Revolution, I repeat, doesn't need violence. The general strike, as practiced in Seattle, is of itself the weapon of revolution, all the more dangerous, because quiet. To succeed, it must suspend everything; stop the entire life stream of a community. . . . That is to say, it puts the government out of operation. And that is all there is to revolt — no matter how achieved."⁷ To the outside world Mayor Hanson was known as the man who refused to parlay with Bolshevism, threatened to have shot at sight the first man who tried to take over the city government, and forced the labor leaders to call off the general strike by the threat of martial law. As such a man he appears in the World's Work for April, 1919, and as such he declared himself in numerous public speeches throughout the United States after the

strike. In Seattle itself the story of his acts before and during the strike is told with considerably less drama but greater probability.

Perhaps the kindest comment on Mayor Hanson was that made by the president of the Seattle Port Commission at a luncheon of the National Popular Government League in Washington, D. C., on March 13, 1919:

Nobody in Seattle heard anything of Mayor Hanson's proclamations until long afterward, when eastern newspapers arrived. The only revolution we had was in the mayor's office while he was present. We are sorry, for the mayor is a good advertiser, and a good fellow, but he lost his head entirely.

This strike was the most good-natured vacation ever enjoyed by working people in our city. They stayed at home, nobody got into trouble, nothing happened except that the mayor hired a lot of special police that have cost the city \$50,000. The Tacoma mayor kept his head and Tacoma has not had a penny of expense for special police.

All the leaders in this strike, which was the deliberate action at all times of all of the membership, were re-elected afterwards to the Central Labor Council. If they were revolutionary then the rank and file of wage workers are the same.⁸

"Permits" and the Strike Committee

Four days before the general strike the meetings of the General Strike Committee commenced and, with their first meeting on Sunday, February 2, the control of the strike passed over to that Committee from the Central Labor Council. This larger Committee consisted of some three hundred delegates from over one hundred unions, all specifically elected for the purpose of conducting the general strike. Problems of organization immediately arose. The constituent members of the Central Labor Council had known and worked with each other for some time, but this was not true of the new General Strike Committee. The amount of business accomplished in such an unwieldy body was, under the circumstances, quite remarkable. An Executive Committee of fifteen was instructed to draw up a plan of action and to consider all questions of exemption from the strike that might arise. Other committees on publicity, on finance,

and on tactics were appointed. The decisions of the Executive Committee were at all times subject to appeal to the whole of the General Strike Committee. The date for the actual commencement of the general walk-out was finally set at ten o'clock in the morning of Thursday, February 6, 1919.⁹

An interesting comment on the temporary power of the strike committee is contained in a report by the Nation's special correspondent.

The extent to which the city recognized the actual rather than the titular government of the community is apparent enough to anyone who reads the carefully kept records of the strike committee, and observes what was actually done. Before the committee, which would seem to have been in well-nigh continuous session day and night, appeared a long succession of business men, city officials, and the Mayor himself, not to threaten or bully, but to discuss the situation and ask the approval of the committee for this or that step. Heads of business houses, little used to asking permission of employees under any circumstances, wrote formal courteous letters to the committee, exactly such as they would have written to any recognized municipal official or department, setting forth their reasons why some business operation should be allowed to go on, and asking the privilege of continuing it.¹⁰

It was natural enough that, once the strike was clearly waning, such business firms should feel a strong reaction against the necessity of such an appeal to an "administration" not elected by democratic vote of the whole of the citizens. This reaction became evident in the support given to the Mayor when he swung over from conciliation to hostility and threats of martial law.

The Executive Committee's first grant of exemption from the strike order was typical of its spirit and purpose. A delegation from the Firemen's Local 27 was requested to appear before the Committee, and after some discussion the firemen were asked to stay on the job. A further exemption followed from the consultation of the laundry drivers and the laundry workers. Their program, accepted by the Executive Committee, proposed that hospital laundry only should be handled during the strike. For this purpose a certain number of laundry wagons were exempted

and furnished with signs and permits, and one of the city laundries was chosen to do this specifically exempted work. It is significant that the Seattle Mutual Laundry, owned by organized labor, was not the laundry chosen for exemption. The laundry workers' scheme, planned to the last detail, included warning to the laundry employers not to accept any new work from that date, and on the other hand allowed the workers to continue a few hours after the strike hour, if the laundry already in their hands was not completed.

Further problems of exemption included appeals for janitors for the City Building and the Labor Temple. The Committee, playing no favorites, turned down both applications. On the other hand, requests by the Teamster's Union to carry oil to the Swedish Hospital, and by the Port of Seattle for men to load a government vessel (where no private profit was in question) were both granted. Garbage wagon drivers were instructed to leave ashes and papers, but to collect garbage, and the drug-stores were advised to fill orders for prescriptions only, during the strike.¹¹

Two most vital problems came up for decision on the Tuesday before the strike commenced. The first concerned the preservation of law and order, the second the duration of the general strike. To meet the first problem the Executive Committee created a Labor War Veteran Guard, consisting of union men who had served in the U.S. Army or Navy. Some three hundred such men were organized, but were given no arms or even clubs, lest the citizens should fear the outcome. These men might have been enrolled in the Special Police at the City Hall, have received stars and clubs and pay, had they been willing to take the oath, but they preferred the unarmed method of persuasion among their own ranks. On the blackboard at the headquarters of this organization was written: "The purpose of this organization is to preserve law and order without the use of force. No volunteer will have any police power or be allowed to carry weapons of any sort, but to use persuasion only. Keep clear of arguments about the strike and discourage others from them."¹²

The question of the strike's duration, and whether a definite limit should be set to it ahead of time, led to much discussion. Many of the older labor leaders, who frankly dreaded the general strike, were urgent that a definite term, preferably two days, should be set to the strike. Among these more conservative

leaders were James Duncan, secretary of the Central Labor Council, and E. B. Ault, editor of the Seattle Union Record. Their efforts, however, failed when the proposal was referred to the general conference committee of the Metal Trades Council in whose behalf the general strike had been called.¹³

On the last day before the general strike a further flood of questions came up before the Executive Committee. One of the printing plants of the city asked leave to continue, inasmuch as many of the unions needed material printed. Leave was refused, but the plant was ultimately turned over to the strike committee, and the printers gave their services without wages for the duration of the strike. Auto drivers were given permission to drive mail and to answer emergency calls for hospitals and funerals, provided such calls were made through the Auto Drivers' Union. Certain bake ovens were allowed to operate, all wages earned during the strike at such bakeries to go to the strike fund. The Ministerial Federation of Seattle sent delegates to the Executive Committee, to submit resolutions they had already telegraphed to Emergency Fleet Corporation Director Piez and to President Wilson, and to ask that the strike be postponed one week in order to give them an opportunity to bring about a peaceful settlement. Their request was refused, but a rising vote of thanks was given for their interest.

The most serious item, and one that brought much of the odium of subsequent days upon the strikers, was the press interview with Leon Green, business agent of the electrical workers, published in the Wednesday morning paper, February 5, declaring that not a single light would burn in Seattle, that the telephones, the press, and all concerns depending upon electric power would cease to function.¹⁴ This aspect of the general strike was, perhaps, the one that brought the least credit to the strike leaders. The various committees, upon reading Leon Green's threat, all became deeply concerned. What would happen to the hospitals, the fire alarm system, the water supply, and the preservation of order on the streets if the electric power were shut off? Hour after hour the problem was debated. The Metal Trades Council finally brought all its influence to bear upon the electrical workers in order that certain exemptions should be granted.

The Mayor of Seattle, in conference with the strike committee, refused to consider the cessation of street lighting, even if other essentials continued. At this point the Electricians'

Union informed the Mayor that if the electrical workers were ordered out from the power plant they themselves would operate enough of the plant to provide for the public needs, such as hospitals. A midnight meeting of the Executive Committee, with the electrical workers, the Engineers and the Metal Trades committee made the final decision. The Mayor himself attended, was reported as saying that water and light must run, but that he did not care so much about the other public utilities; that he would prefer to run the plants with union men, but would use soldiers from the near-by camps if forced to do so. After he left, the Executive Committee ordered the electrical workers to run the city plant, with the exception of commercial power. As it turned out, no cessation of power occurred, the whole threat of a walk-out being a matter of bluff on the part of Leon Green, who could not have called out the workers at the plant if he had tried, as they were but partially organized. Green was later arrested in Chicago on a bribery charge. There was a general feeling among the labor ranks that he was an agent provocateur, as he subsequently dropped out of the union movement.¹⁵

The Walk-out and Its Aftermath

As the hour of ten o'clock arrived on Thursday morning, February 6, the street car men turned their cars toward the car barns, union elevator men in the large buildings abandoned their posts, and restaurants closed their doors as their union cooks and waiters departed. For twenty-four hours no attempt was made to run a street car, in spite of Mayor Hanson's threats to use the military.¹⁶

At the opening of the second day of the strike the press wires from Seattle reported that theaters and schools had closed, shipping was being diverted to Oregon ports, newspapers had suspended publication, and restaurants continued closed. Over a thousand soldiers arrived from Camp Lewis to aid the police in keeping order, but the police did not receive a single trouble call as a result of the strike. It was estimated that thirty thousand men and women had left their employment in sympathy with the striking shipyard workers. The hotels operated without engineers, maids, or laundry service, but they did not lack food as large supplies had been laid in before the outbreak of strike.¹⁷ Friday evening the Scripps paper, the *Star*, published a strike edition, with its plant under armed guard of soldiers,

further soldiers riding on and guarding the distribution truck. Saturday morning the Post-Intelligencer put out a four-page sheet and distributed it to the crowd gratis.¹⁸

On Friday the Mayor demanded that the strike be called off on Saturday morning, February 8, on pain of martial law. This threat severely embarrassed the Executive Committee who were already considering the question of ending the strike. By a vote of 13 to 1 they decided nonetheless to call off the strike on Saturday night. When their decision was carried to the full General Strike Committee it became evident that the ranks were unwilling to return to work. Discussion raged all afternoon and night, and at four o'clock on Sunday morning, February 9, the resolution to end the strike was overwhelmingly defeated.¹⁹ "It was not until after more radical elements and a crowd of strikers outside the doors and on the stairs shouted disapproval, that the General Strike Committee finally voted to continue the strike."²⁰

Despite this vote of the Committee of three hundred delegates, the strike had begun to dwindle. On Friday a single union barber shop had reopened, and fifteen of the city schools had remained open, their engineers and janitors refusing to heed the strike orders. By Saturday several unions returned to work by order of their international officers, who had never approved the strike call and had hurried to Seattle to handle the situation. On Monday the stereotypers, the barbers, auto drivers, milk drivers, ice wagon drivers, and bill posters were reported back to work.²¹ The restaurants, however, were still badly crippled as their union cooks and waiters determined to remain out.²² When, therefore, the Executive Committee again put forward a resolution, this time calling for the end of the strike at noon on Tuesday, February 11, the General Strike Committee accepted the resolution at once.²³

As the strike ended, the reaction that always follows such an event set in. An "open shop" rule was launched by the Water-front Employers' Association, the employers feeling secure behind the ranks of armed men and with the tacit aid of the international officers of the unions, who were likely to penalize their union locals for their unauthorized strike.²⁴ Arrests were made of I. W. W. members although they had not been responsible for calling or the running of the strike. The Socialist party headquarters was raided and its candidate for the city council arrested. The Equity Printing Plant, a cooperative plant with

stock owned by individual workers or their unions, was raided, its manager arrested, and the plant closed down.²⁵

The strike in the shipyards, however, continued unabated, the general strike accomplishing nothing save the stiffening of hostility on the part of even the erstwhile friendly shipyard management.²⁶ Attempts made in February to reopen the Skinner and Eddy plant under the same wage rates in force before the strike were met by vacillation on the part of the Emergency Fleet Corporation and representatives of the Macy Board, who at times appeared to favor resumption on the pre-strike terms, at others asked the Emergency Fleet Corporation to penalize the Skinner and Eddy Corporation for departing from the Macy Board award.²⁷ Finally, as late as March 17, 1919, the shipyard workers returned to work in Seattle and Tacoma yards on the conditions existent before the strike. Owing to the stand taken by the Skinner and Eddy Corporation, the rest of the shipyards had ultimately to withdraw their open shop ultimatum.²⁸

How intense was the feeling against the strikers can be seen in an explosive editorial in the *N. Y. Times*. Under the head "Ole Hanson and the Undesirables" (referring obliquely to the transfer from the West Coast of a trainload of alien deportees) the Eastern editor let fly:

At the urging of foreign agitators a general strike of 45,000 union men in sympathy with 25,000 shipyard workers was devised in Seattle. Every arrangement was made for the overthrow of the constituted authorities and the setting up of the volunteers of violence...insolent, alien efforts to reproduce here the horrible disorders that have ruined Russia...the insidious, destructive intrigue of the agents of universal disaster is at work.²⁹

High praise was handed to Hanson for ordering the police to "shoot at sight" anyone attempting to take over the "functions of the city." The cold facts on the "alien deportees," who were alleged in press headlines to be the leaders of Seattle's strike, are to be found in the comments of the West Coast Commissioner of Immigration, Henry White, and those of Anthony Caminetti, the Federal Commissioner General of Immigration. The former stated that: "It was merely a coincidence that they (the deportees) left here (Seattle) on the day that the general strike was called, as none of them had been arrested in connection

with the strike. They were all foreigners whose activities during the war had led to their arrest."³⁰ And Commissioner General Caminetti: "None of the aliens recently taken from Seattle to Ellis Island for deportation has any connection with the strike at Seattle or elsewhere in the West."³¹ In reality so far was the Seattle strike from being an alien led outbreak, it was evident that a great many of the labor leaders were far from happy when the great strike began. Recent books indicate that many of the radical leaders were in Chicago at the time the strike was called. When they heard the news they were "frankly frightened" with the "unleashed power" of the general strike: "It might easily smash something - us perhaps, our well organized labor movement. Yet we could not repudiate action taken by sixty thousand workers.... Thus from the beginning the leaders wavered between an open support of the strike and an unadmitted wish to stop it."³² Later, as the strike's collapse is recorded, Anna Louise Strong continues:

All of us were red in the ranks and yellow as leaders. For we lacked all intention of real battle; we expected to drift into power.... The general strike put into our hands the organized life of the city - all except the guns. We could last only until they started shooting; we were one gigantic bluff. That expert in bluffing, Ole Hanson, saw this on the second day of the struggle. We did not see it; not even when the strike was over....³³

Another writer, describing the historic events of the Seattle area points up the strong and the weak spots in the general strike:

They (the Committee of Fifteen) made sure there would be milk for children and for the hospitals, that the hospitals could get laundry, that water pressure would be kept up. They set up strike kitchens and arranged for food to be supplied. Anyone could buy a meal, but strikers got cut rates. They set up an auxiliary police force of "labor guards" to help the city police. All this they did with considerable foresight, but one thing they did not do; they did not state their aims. They did not state them because they did not know them. They were not sure how long the strike was to last, whether it was merely a gesture of solidarity with the

shipyard workers, whether it was a move toward educating the workers in the problems of running a city, whether it was an attempt to touch off a nation-wide general strike. No one knew whether the gun was loaded.³⁴

The reaction against organized labor took a political shape in the municipal elections of 1919 and 1920. In 1919 three union men were nominated as candidates against three councilmen standing for reelection. As Seattle elections had been on a non-partisan basis for some years this cleavage on class lines was all the more evident. Organized business was alarmed and the Chamber of Commerce appealed to the citizens to support those candidates who were not subservient to or controlled by any one organization or class. The three labor candidates were defeated. In 1920 James Duncan, secretary of the Central Labor Council, was put forward as candidate for mayor and supported by the Seattle Union Record. The three other papers opposed him, and the issue was made one of "loyalty" and "patriotism." Duncan suffered severe defeat, but two of the labor candidates were elected to the City Council.³⁵

Apart from the loss in wages that the general strike entailed and the possible loss of wage increases in certain cases pending just before the strike, the Metal Trades found that they had incurred a loss of nearly seven thousand dollars in their food-kitchen experiment. Twenty-one eating places had been opened in various quarters of the city by the strikers. The food had been cooked in large kitchens donated for the purpose by different restaurants; thence transported to various halls and served cafeteria style, at twenty-five to thirty-five cents a meal, according to whether or not the customer possessed a union card. The short duration of the strike was largely to blame for this deficit, as the managers of the food kitchens over-estimated the number of meals that would be required in the first days of the experiment and had much loss in food. Equipment and trucking had caused further heavy expense that a longer period of service would have recouped. By the close of the strike, however, the commissary committee was serving 30,000 meals a day with little trouble or friction — quite an achievement for "green hands" in so short a time.

In similar manner the milk wagon drivers' union had to meet a loss of some seven hundred dollars, through the quantity of milk that went to waste, for which they had contracted with the

farmers. On the other hand, these milk wagon drivers had succeeded in organizing milk centers all over Seattle where pure, certified, but unpasteurized milk was available for the babies and invalids of the city.³⁶ The general sense of cooperative achievement that such experiments left behind them and the recognition of the solidarity of labor, even in the weaker unions, made up, perhaps, in some degree, for the very evident failure of the general strike. Such failure was due, in no small degree, to the strike leaders' omission at the outset to define clearly both the duration and the precise purpose of the general strike. In the absence of such definite limits it was a simple matter for the forces of the citizens, the employers, and the non-labor press to raise the cry of "revolution" and, in the end, demonstrate to the world's satisfaction that the general strike had been a fiasco.

The Trouble in Winnipeg

The localized general strike in the city of Winnipeg, starting on May 15, 1919, and running through to the twenty-sixth of June, constitutes one of the longest and most stubborn general strikes in history. Though on a comparatively small scale, the total number of strikers not exceeding 35,000 in a population of about 200,000, the effect of the strike was to paralyze all life and industry in the city and to threaten seriously all the larger towns and cities, on the main lines of communications from Toronto to Vancouver, with an extension of the strike, before Winnipeg's dispute was brought to a close.³⁷

The Winnipeg strike produced more lasting effect than that in Seattle earlier in the same year, not only because of its duration, but because it crystallized the strong class feeling of the after-war period, alike in the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand that opposed the strike leaders from the outset; in the final, hasty legislative steps taken to railroad the strike leaders into jail and out of the country; and in the dramatic trials of those leaders that followed upon the failure of this attempt to be rid of them by covert means. The treatment of the strike leaders by the Dominion and Provincial Government was much quoted, at the inception of the British strike of 1926, as a hint to the British Government that similar action might be advisable. Such press advice was not taken in the British case.

The persistence with which the general strike continued is the more remarkable in that labor had been better organized at

the outset of the strike in Seattle than it had in Winnipeg, yet the Seattle strike was wavering within three days of its commencement. In Winnipeg, moreover, the unions in the Metal Trades had their own council, as in Seattle, but unlike Seattle, it was not recognized by the employers. The majority of the metal workers were employed in the Winnipeg railway shops, and were organized in some nineteen craft unions, and the officers of the Metal Trades Council were railway men. The controversy that arose in the metal trades, however, had to do, not with the railway shops so much as with three foundries: the Vulcan Iron Works, the Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works, and the Dominion Bridge Company. The managements of these companies were willing to make contracts with their own workers, through the craft unions if necessary, but they were unalterably opposed to making any joint agreements through the Metal Trades' Council. It was the refusal of the "Collective Bargaining" in this rather novel interpretation of the term, that was one of the basic causes of the general strike.³⁸

A demand for a living wage that would more nearly meet the war-time increases in the cost of living was a further immediate cause of the strike. The Building Trades' Council had sought to obtain an increase of twenty cents an hour. The employers had offered about half that amount, but had refused absolutely to deal with the Building Trades' Council, though, like the iron-masters, they were willing to make agreements with the individual craft unions. The cost of living was said to have increased some 80 per cent over pre-war rates, whereas the previous wage increases had amounted to barely 20 per cent. The wage increase demanded constituted a further 32 per cent. The outcome was the declaration of a strike among the building workers in Winnipeg on May 1, 1919, and one day later the Metal Trades' Council called a strike in its own trades. The wage rates asked for by the metal trade workers were the same as those paid on the railways for similar work, under the McAdoo award. In addition a reduction of hours from 10 to 8 per day was demanded. The employers were willing to grant only a nine-hour day.³⁹

The trades on strike in Winnipeg appealed to their local Trades and Labor Council for support. That organization advocated a sympathetic strike of the remaining industries and trades and referred the question to its constituent unions for a secret ballot. Of the twelve thousand workers affiliated with the Trades and Labor Council on a preliminary return some 8,667 voted

for a strike and 645 against it. Even the police union members voted 149 to 11 in favor of a walk-out. The various unions concerned, some 95 in all, each appointed three delegates to a large Strike Committee, with a smaller executive committee of fifteen, selected from the larger body. The full Strike Committee, however, decided all matters of policy, and appointed the subsidiary committees on the Press, on Relief, on Organization, and on Food Supplies. The Pressmen's union decided to do no printing whatever, not even of the Labor paper, but agreed to depute men who would work without pay on the strike bulletin, which was issued daily from the seventeenth of May onward. The appointment of the editor, the policy, size, and finances of this strike bulletin were also decided by the Strike Committee.⁴⁰

The general strike was called for May 15, 1919. The Strike Committee included in its strike call the city firemen, employees in the city's high pressure water plant, in the light, power, and street cleaning departments, even the clerks in the City Hall. Only the police and workers in the domestic water supply plant were specially requested to stay at their posts by the Strike Committee. Furthermore, the employees of the Manitoba Government Telephones and the Dominion Government's post offices, workers in the various express and telegraphic companies, and on the Winnipeg Electric (street) Railway, all joined the strike. There were called out, in addition, employees in the bakeries and dairies, in retail and wholesale establishments dealing with the necessities of life, together with the truck drivers and delivery men of these establishments. Restaurant workers, passenger and freight elevator operators, caretakers and janitors ceased to work, and the hotels were practically closed down, as were the banks, owing to lack of mail and telegraphic communication. The only telegraphic messages allowed to pass were those concerning health, the moving or arrival of troop trains, and Government business. By the third day of the strike the newspapers had to cease publication owing to the pressmen's strike. Only the daily strike bulletin and the sheet issued by the Citizens' Committee appeared.⁴¹

On the second day of the strike, having given evidence of their power to close down the whole life of the city, the Strike Committee requested the distributive workers to return, the delivery vans of bread and milk carrying special cards with the words "Permitted by authority of the Strike Committee." The assertion of control over the city's life was looked upon by the

Citizens' Committee as evidence of the revolutionary purpose of the strike, and ultimately these cards were discontinued as a result of the strong disapproval of Mayor Gray.⁴² Elevator operators and engineers at the city hospitals were asked by the Strike Committee to resume their work, and volunteer carpentry work was done for hospitals without pay by union men. But for the rapid organization of the Citizens' Committee, however, Winnipeg would have been in a sorry plight, or would have been forced to concede the strikers' demand of "collective bargaining," higher wages, and reinstatement of the strikers.⁴³

The "Citizens' Committee of One Thousand"

The general strike in Winnipeg was not without warning. In the previous year a strike of public utilities lasting less than two weeks had forced the citizens to organize themselves as volunteer workers, for street-cars, postal, and telephone services, and for police and fire protection. The lesson of that earlier experience had not been lost upon the citizen volunteers.⁴⁴ Again, from another source there had been a hint of coming trouble. A great mass meeting in the Walker Theater on December 22, 1918, had given vocal protest to the feelings of organized labor in Winnipeg against the method of government by "Orders-in-Council," by which the right to strike had been forbidden as late as October 11 of 1918. Workers feared that such "orders" would carry over their prohibitory force into peace time, after the signing of the Armistice, although that particular "Order-in-Council" had been repealed by the Governor on the nineteenth of November. In the subsequent trial of the strike leaders the Government tried to prove that the Walker Theater meeting was but one act of a series in a plan to bring "into hatred and contempt" the laws and Government of the Dominion of Canada, the culminating act of which was, of course, the general strike.⁴⁵

The most evident proof of prearranged trouble, in the minds of the citizen volunteers, however, rested in the famous Western Canada Labor convention held at Calgary, Alberta, on March 13, 14, and 15, 1919. That convention had been confessedly a move to break away from the "international" labor federations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and to inaugurate the regime of One Big Union for Canada, with an industrial and political program more akin to the radical reconstruction program of British Labor at that time. The resolutions

committee of this convention had combined demands for free speech, removal of the ban upon radical labor literature, the release of political prisoners, the six-hour day and five-day week, with a plan for a general strike on June 1 if these demands had not been granted by that time. A further resolution had threatened a general strike if the Allied governments persisted in using armed force against the existing Soviet Government of Russia. The thought of the general strike was, therefore, well to the front in the minds of the more radical workers and leaders in Canada at this time.⁴⁶

On the evening before the strike was called the original Committee of One Hundred held a public meeting and expanded that smaller body into the Committee of One Thousand, the better to cope with the crisis which they foresaw must develop immediately. A volunteer fire department took charge of the city fire stations at the moment when the regular men walked out on strike. Threats had been made that if the city water pressure were raised above thirty pounds (sufficient only for two-story buildings) all the staff remaining at the Domestic Water Plant would join the strikers. The Citizens' Committee proceeded at once to organize three shifts of volunteers under competent engineers and, when ready, made formal demand upon the civic authorities that water pressure be restored to normal. This was officially ordered by the Mayor and City Council; the remaining regular staffs walked out as threatened, and the volunteer staffs at once took charge, under the supervision of the City Engineer.⁴⁷

A further organization was formed to protect the 350 fire alarm boxes in the city, inasmuch as frequent false alarms had been rung in after the walkout of the regular firemen. A motor transport organization was formed with a fleet of sixty cars to serve the fire department and the high pressure pumping station, and a further general utility fleet of seven hundred cars, divided into a hundred units of six men and a captain. The captains met daily and carried the orders to their units at once. In the event of a general alarm, assembly points throughout the whole city were apportioned, where each unit would be ready to place itself under military orders. In the meantime this motor transport organization served to carry volunteer workers to and from the telephone exchanges, deliver mail, distribute the Daily Citizen (the daily bulletin of the Citizens' Committee), attend to hospital requirements and transport the military

headquarters staff and the citizen soldiers.⁴⁸

At the outset of the strike there were no such military resources as existed within easy reach of Seattle. Possibly two hundred returned soldiers were in barracks awaiting discharge, and a score of North West Mounted Police. Within a week, however, at least ten thousand soldiers were in Winnipeg under Brig. Gen. Ketchum. Significantly enough the strike bulletin announced that "permission to handle troop trains on the railways has been granted," apparently showing considerable power of permit-granting on the part of the Strike Committee.⁴⁹ Some three to five thousand citizen volunteers were formed into a militia, and the city was divided into five military districts. Later in the strike a band of special police were enrolled, consisting of returned officers and men from the expeditionary forces.⁵⁰

The Returned Soldiers Take Part

The returned soldiers played a large part in the strike, both sides angling adroitly for their support. On the very first day of the strike a mass meeting of war veterans was called. A resolution to observe neutrality in the strike, but to place their services at the disposal of the civic, provincial and military authorities was voted down after a stormy meeting, and the following short motion was carried: "That this meeting declares its full sympathy with the purposes of the present strike to meet the general condition of the people, and pledges itself to use every legitimate means to preserve law and order, and that after the strike is settled labor and the returned soldiers get together and discuss the deportation of the enemy alien."

The second portion of the motion showed evidence of the efforts already made by the "Citizens" side to set the returned soldiers against the ranks of union labor, under the plea of the vast number of aliens and alien enemies in the unions. In the second and succeeding weeks of the strike, street parades of strikers led by over one thousand returned soldiers, would alternate with parades of some thousands of returned soldiers carrying banners with such lurid titles as "To Hell with the Alien Enemy," "Down with Bolshevism," "Deport the Undesirable Alien," showing that propaganda had already done its work. Even to the end something approaching two thousand of the returned soldiers stood by the strikers.⁵¹

An attempt to bring the strike to an end in the second week

by means of a meeting before Mayor Gray, of citizens, trade unionists, and employers, failed dismally, since the employers demanded that the sympathetic strike be renounced in principle before they would negotiate, whereas the strike leaders demanded the right to "collective bargaining," and R. B. Russell, leader of the metal trades' workers, declared that the trade unionists of twenty-six other cities were ready to strike rather than see Winnipeg labor lose.⁵² This failure to negotiate, and the growing strength of the citizens' organizations and the military forces, stiffened the resistance of labor and hardened the attitude of the authorities. The strike settled down to a grim struggle of attrition.

The Dominion Government issued an ultimatum to the postal employees to return to work by the twenty-sixth of May and to sign an agreement never again to join any sympathetic strike, nor to remain affiliated with the Trades and Labor Council. The alternative was dismissal, loss of pension and the right to be employed by the Dominion Government. The Provincial government took the same attitude toward the telephone employees and the Civic authorities to their city employees. In the majority of cases the workers refused to return or to sign the "slave pact." How little was the response is seen from a Winnipeg wire to the London Times as late as June 2 stating that all public services except the trolleys had been restored by volunteer labor, but that the ultimatum to the police had been postponed to June 3 — a full week after the original ultimatum date.⁵³

In point of fact, a great deal had happened in that week. The railroadmen on the main lines through Winnipeg began to grow exceedingly restive, took strike votes, and sent urgent telegrams to headquarters of their international unions for permission to strike. On May 24 the miners of Alberta went on strike. A heavy strike vote was cast by forty-four unions in Toronto on May 27, while in Calgary the street cars ceased to run and hotels and restaurants closed down. In Vancouver the Trades and Labor Council telegraphed the Dominion Government: "Unless the Government recedes from its position of opposing collective bargaining through joint councils and of expressing its determination to replace the striking postal workers of Winnipeg and other places, the workers of this city will declare a general strike." By the first of June, 235 factories in Toronto were closed, fifty garment-making shops were idle and work on some fifty buildings had stopped. On June 3 a sympathetic general

strike started in Vancouver.⁵⁴

In Winnipeg itself matters had grown no easier with the passage of time. Two thousand returned soldiers marched upon the Manitoba Parliament and demanded of Premier Norris an immediate settlement of the strike by legislation making collective bargaining legal, and the modification of the ultimatum to the Winnipeg police. An orderly and peaceful parade through the streets of the city followed. The next day a still larger crowd of returned soldiers went to the Parliament House for Premier Norris' answer, only to be told that the police were not under his jurisdiction but under that of the city; that he could not give immediate legislation; that the Government would not act until the sympathetic strike had been called off. A stormy meeting followed at the City Hall, where the Council was in session. Mayor Gray insisted that there must be no more sympathy strikes in the public utilities. He contended that there had been no ultimatum to the police. It was learned later in the day that the ultimatum had been postponed for a week.⁵⁵

On June 2 a third visit to the Premier was made by the strikers and soldiers. This time only soldiers were allowed within the building. The same demands for immediate legislation were made with the alternative of Premier Norris' resignation. The Premier declared that he could not call a special session, that he favored collective bargaining but opposed sympathetic strikes. He refused to consider the resignation of his office. The same attitude toward the strikers was taken by the Dominion Government. Premier Borden stood by his decision that civil servants should not take part in strikes, and that all who did so would be instantly dismissed.⁵⁶ The Dominion Minister of Labor, Mr. Robertson, writing to President Gompers of the American Federation of Labor, gave his view of the Winnipeg situation:

A general sympathetic strike involving ninety-five unions was called in the city of Winnipeg May 15, resulting in a complete tie-up of all business and the declaration of the strike committee of control over civic affairs, as well as interference with provincial and federal employees. As in the case of all general strikes of this nature, it has already defeated itself, but I feel it is proper to address you, after being on the ground for several days, that in my opinion the prestige and authority of the International Unions whose local membership participated in the strike.... should

receive earnest and serious consideration of the executives of the various organizations concerned.... The underlying motive in calling the strike is undoubtedly to support what is known as the One Big Union movement....

The result of the letter and the strike was to bring a number of the "international" officers up to Winnipeg and Toronto, for the purpose both of settling the strike and of penalizing the recalcitrant locals.⁵⁷

The pressure upon the strikers throughout Canada now became intense. In Toronto, where 15,000 men had quit work for a 44-hour week and in sympathy with Winnipeg, the employers refused point-blank to make any concessions, claiming that it was "not a strike but a Socialist-inspired movement" and a "rebellion against capital." A citizens' committee of ten thousand was formed to meet the emergency. The success of the general strike hinged largely on the action of the returned soldiers. After a long meeting the street car men, nearly 80 per cent of whom were war veterans, finally decided not to join the general walk-out in Toronto and this decision practically settled the fate of the general strike call in that city. The appearance of "international" officers in Toronto and the hostility of the more conservative leaders of the Toronto Trades' Council completed its failure.⁵⁸

The Strikers Become Bitter

On the other hand, the strike spread in Western Canada, where the interest in radicalism and the One Big Union was far stronger than in the east. At 11 o'clock on June 3, some 60,000 workers "downed tools" in Vancouver, at the call of the Trades and Labor Council in that city, in sympathy with Winnipeg, and for a program of their own. The shipyards, the harbor and, a day later, the street cars, all closed down, and the compositors threatened to censor all "unfair" news. At the same time Kennedy and James Duncan from Seattle, alleged "Bolshevik" leaders, but in fact among the more conservative in Seattle, arrived in Winnipeg and were reported as advising "famine" tactics. Whether or not this was actually the fact, the strikers resumed a good deal of control in Winnipeg for a day or two, calling out once more all milk and bread wagon-drivers, employees in the restaurants and the city newsboys. In retaliation the Mayor had yet more "specials" sworn in, forbade all processions in the

streets, guaranteed protection to bakeries, and organized city milk centers at forty-three of the public schools. Large supplies of ammunition were unloaded and distributed to the Winnipeg barracks on June 3 — a sinister event.⁵⁹

Tension increased in Winnipeg. Where hitherto order had reigned, even by the admission of labor opponents, now for the first time an ugly spirit began to show itself. Bread and milk delivery carts were stopped, their tires torn off, and food deliveries made difficult. The workers' ranks were reported as "substantially unbroken" on June 10, and the employers, with the full support of the Federal and Provincial Governments on their side refused any negotiations as long as the sympathetic strike lasted.⁶⁰ On June 7, in the Dominion Parliament at Ottawa, a bill to amend the existing Immigration Acts was rushed through both houses and received the royal assent within the space of one hour. The purpose of the amending bill was to make it possible for the Government to seize a man who was not born in the Dominion and deport him without trial and even without a charge, save that he was "an undesirable alien." The purpose was evident. Fourteen out of fifteen members of the strike committee in Toronto were English born, and a large number of the leaders in the western provinces were English speaking socialists, rather than Russian or "enemy aliens" as the press propaganda had endeavored to prove. Such an Act would permit the obnoxious leaders to be railroaded out of the country without trial or legal delay.⁶¹

Once the bill was law, the propaganda redoubled. On June 10, press reports made much of a Secret Service investigation in Canada and the United States, purporting to show that the Winnipeg strike originated at the Calgary Convention in March, that it was directed by the I. W. W., and that the leaders "possessed disgraceful traitorous records in every case." Significantly not a single name was given in the press report. Simultaneously the whole police force of Winnipeg, refusing absolutely to sign the pledge against sympathetic strikes, found themselves dismissed from office, and a new force of 2,000 overseas men were sworn in. At the same time the various city tradesmen refused any further credit to those with no money. Up to this point in the strike Mr. Richardson, owner of the Winnipeg Tribune, could say "apart from much petty intimidation there have been no riots or bloodshed."⁶²

Now, however, the long suppressed feelings on both sides

burst forth into violence. The immediate cause was simple and natural enough. The special police appeared officially upon the streets for the first time on June 10, taking the place of the 225 regulars who had been dismissed the night before. At noon two special constables, one of them an overseas veteran and son of a former Cabinet minister, took their stand at a busy corner to direct the traffic. A crowd of strikers gathered and after certain remarks at the expense of the new police had been made by returned soldiers, trouble started. Mounted and foot special police were assailed with bottles, brick-bats, ash-can covers, and their own clubs. For three hours the melee lasted, and broken heads were too numerous to be counted. Twelve of the police were injured and five had to receive hospital treatment. The Citizens' Committee protested rather bitterly that Mayor Gray had not read the riot act and turned the affair over to the military, which was in barracks in great strength. The Mayor, however, was determined that a call for the military should be given only for "extreme provocation."⁶³

For a few days the "specials" were removed from the downtown streets, and traffic moved easily, there being no disorder, even though no police were in sight. Vast crowds of strikers gathered around the Trades Hall as rumors spread that the leaders were to be arrested. The Chief of Police, offered three months' leave, and refusing to take it, was dismissed, though he had served the city for nine years.⁶⁴ Evidently more rigorous methods were on foot, as a Toronto wire to the London Times on June 14 would indicate:

There is great tension in Winnipeg. The authorities have 45 squads of machine gunners and 10,000 civilians and returned soldiers, each of whom spends two nights a week in barracks, 300 mounted police, 100 Fort Garry Horse, and 3,600 special police.

The gravity of the situation is accentuated by the certainty that a percentage of the returned soldiers are in sympathy with the strikers.⁶⁵

Strike Leaders Arrested

Finally the bolt was shot. After long conferences between Premier Norris, Brig. Gen. Ketchum and Lt. Col. Stearns of the North West Mounted Police, the authorities took courage behind their vast military forces, and in the "wee, small hours" of the morning of June 17, ten of the strike leaders were arrested,

hurried from their beds, and taken to Stony Mountain Penitentiary. Bail was refused, and it was stated in the press that some of the arrested men would be deported under the new Act, without charge or trial. The Manitoba Premier accused the Dominion authorities of being responsible for the arrests, and the Dominion Government returned the compliment.⁶⁶

Later, Minister of Labor Robertson of the Dominion Government admitted that the Federal Department of Justice was responsible for the arrests. Widespread protest followed the spiriting of the leaders to Stony Mountain. The Mayor of Winnipeg declared that the danger point was past and the leaders already discredited. The Winnipeg Free Press asserted that the arrests were untimely, since the strike would have been defeated in another thirty hours. Pressure of public opinion resulted in the release of Ivens, Russell, Quinn, Heaps, and Bray on bail of \$2,000 each, inasmuch as they were all British born, and the Government decided to proceed against them in court.⁶⁷

By the end of the next week the strike was officially ended, but not until a most bloody riot had occurred. How far the riot was desired by the armed authorities as a more effective means of convicting the arrested leaders will never be known, but there is some evidence to show that the firing took place with little or no warning to the crowd. On Saturday, June 21, a silent parade of strikers and soldiers was organized. Mayor Gray had previously announced that "any women taking part in a parade do so at their own risk." Despite the warning vast crowds of strikers and their women folk assembled to witness the "silent parade." A delegation from the soldiers was interviewing Senator Robertson, and had not returned to their comrades when the latter began to line up on Main Street near the City Hall. At the time the parade was scheduled to start, about two-thirty in the afternoon, some fifty mounted men, swinging baseball bats, rode down Main Street. Half of these wore khaki; the rest were in the red coats of the North West Mounted Police. The crowd opened to let them through, they turned and charged the crowd, which greeted them with stones and hostile cries. The men in khaki disappeared at this juncture, but the red coats re-formed, and "with revolvers drawn, galloped down Main Street, turned and charged right into the crowd on William Avenue, firing as they charged." Such is the story as told by J.S. Woodsworth, one of the strike leaders, an ex-Methodist minister and director of a Bureau of Social Research, maintained by three Canadian provinces.⁶⁸

The other side of the story is that Mayor Gray read the riot act when the 20,000 strikers had assembled, and called on General Ketchum for aid. The crowd mobbed a street car (the trolleys had not hitherto been running), and attacked the mounted police who rode up; the mob, beaten back, fought with stones, and started to wreck everything in sight. A mounted trooper, unhorsed, fled; was pursued and fired at. The mounted police returned the fire and the military came to their aid. The crowd in their hurry to escape broke through shops and private houses. Armored cars were at all important street corners. Both stories sound a trifle too perfect. The outcome was the death of one spectator and the wounding of many others, including a returned soldier.⁶⁹ At the trial of the arrested strike leaders the officer commanding the mounted police on the day of the riot was reported as stating in his evidence to the Court:

About 120 bullets in all were fired into the crowd of men, women and children. They were not marching around the streets but standing in front of the City Hall. Many were running away when we fired at them... I have no idea if the crowd would have run if blank cartridges were fired instead of those able to take effect. Under instructions I didn't wait to see if they'd run with our charge, but fired at them.⁷⁰

On the twenty-sixth of June, some six weeks after the general strike had started, it was officially declared at an end. The Provincial Government for its part appointed a commission to investigate and settle grievances. The metal trades were said to have won their demand for collective bargaining,⁷¹ but the firemen, police, and postal employees lost their positions permanently. The telegraph and street car operators were to be reinstated, as also the railway shopmen who had struck in sympathy, but disciplinary action was taken against the locomotive engineers who had joined the strike. A loss of some four million dollars due to the strike was alleged.⁷² As in Seattle, so in Winnipeg, the class struggle of the general strike was carried into the local political field at the municipal election that followed. The Citizens' Committee used every effort in the three daily newspapers to defeat the labor candidates, and all candidates likely to "split" the Citizens' vote were persuaded to withdraw. The result was a vote of 15,630 for Mayor Gray, as against 12,514 for his labor opponent. Four of

the seven wards of the city were carried by labor, but the "plural" property vote defeated their candidate. At the close of the election, labor possessed a 50 per cent representation on the aldermanic body.⁷³

The Trial of the Strike Leaders

Apart from the stubborn resistance of the strikers over so long a period of time, the Winnipeg general strike will be famous in labor history for the dramatic trials of the strike leaders. Of the ten men arrested and put on trial for conspiracy and seditious utterances, not one was born outside the British Empire. Six were born in England, two in Scotland, and two in Canada. Two of them, William Ivens and J. S. Woodsworth, were ex-Methodist ministers; two, Quinn and Heaps, were Winnipeg aldermen; one, F. J. Dixon, was a member of the Manitoba Legislature, with the largest majority of any member in that body.⁷⁴

The indictment preferred against all but Woodsworth and Dixon consisted of seven counts, which in very brief summary included the following points:

(1) Conspiracy to bring into "hatred and contempt and to excite disaffection against the Government, laws, and constitution of the Dominion of Canada" and of the Province of Manitoba; together with the promotion of hostility between class and class.

(2) Responsibility for the Walker Theater meeting in Winnipeg, December 22, 1918, and for that held in the Majestic Theater on January 19, 1919. That "as a result of said meetings unlawful assemblies and riots took place, and property was destroyed and persons assaulted and injured" in Winnipeg, (presumably six months later on June 10 and 21). Aiding, abetting and assisting in causing the holding of the Calgary Labor Convention in March for the purpose of furthering the One Big Union; the publication of seditious literature (strike bulletins and the Western Labor News); and the calling of the general strike in Winnipeg on May 15, 1919, were further portions of this count.

(3) The paralysis of industry in the city of Winnipeg, whereby "constituted authority was challenged and usurped."

(4) Endangering the lives of Winnipeg citizens, and the exposure of property to serious injury.

(5) Undermining and destroying the confidence of Winnipeg citizens in the Dominion and Manitoba laws and Governments, all "intended to be a step in a revolution against the constitutional form of government in Canada."

(6) The attempt to bring about a Soviet form of government in Canada through general strikes.

(7) Depriving the citizens of Winnipeg of their "right to conduct themselves and their businesses in such manner as they were lawfully entitled to do."⁷⁵

The actual indictment covered eight columns of newsprint in fine type, and was as full of circumlocution and repetition as such a document could possibly be.

R. B. Russell's case was taken first, in the late fall of 1919. Russell had been a machinist until February, 1918, when he became the business agent for the local Metal Trades Council. It was Russell who moved the resolution in the Walker Theater demanding the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Russia. He represented the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council at the Calgary convention and it was his Trades Council of metal workers that was largely instrumental in calling for a general strike in Winnipeg. Russell's trial was of importance in that evidence obtained in that trial was used subsequently against the other accused leaders. In Judge Metcalf's charge to the jury in this case he declared:

If collective bargaining means that thereby the workers of Canada may enforce upon the employer a recognition... of agencies for the purpose of making contracts for their men with the employers; and if such a condition of affairs will make it more easy for those who control or who desire to control labor for unlawful purposes, to tie up industry from coast to coast, to give as much inconvenience to the general public as possible, to make a strike efficient... so that a revolution by a strike might be brought about more easily, it was seditious to make these demands in that way.⁷⁶

Russell was found guilty by a jury of ten farmers and two merchants on all counts and was sentenced to serve two years in the Stony Mountain Penitentiary. In labor quarters the verdict and sentence raised a storm of protest. Trade union lawyers declared that if the verdict stood there would be nothing to

prevent leaders of any strike being prosecuted for seditious conspiracy. The verdict summarized seemed to imply that the following would be classed as seditious: general strikes, sympathetic strikes, direct action, one big union, seeking to control industry, advocating a change in the form of Government, in short, anything endangering the "comfort, etc." of the public.⁷⁷

F. J. Dixon's trial was as sensational as Russell's but for a different reason. An Englishman by birth, a single-taxer, a Labor member for Winnipeg in the Manitoba House, but hostile to the One Big Union idea, his part in the strike consisted chiefly in speeches to the workers exhorting solidarity. He was accused of seditious libel, that is, of editing the strike bulletin after the arrest of William Ivens; and Justice Galt, before whom he was tried, declared that this "was one of the most infamous conspiracies" he had known in Canada, and that "the strike was illegal from the very start." Dixon pleaded his own case against three of Canada's ablest lawyers and based his defense on inherent rights, part and parcel of the British heritage of democratic freedom. After forty hours of deliberation the jury brought in a verdict of "not guilty."⁷⁸

In June of the same year, in the elections for the provincial legislature of Manitoba under the new system of proportional representation in voting, F. J. Dixon achieved a further extraordinary popular triumph. He received 11,000 first choice ballots, or three times as many as his nearest opponent, the Minister of Public Works. Labor as a whole polled 45 per cent of the total effective vote and obtained 40 per cent of the seats for Winnipeg city.⁷⁹ Dixon's acquittal caused the Crown to drop the case against Woodsworth, whose indictment was on much the same plane as Dixon's, save that one of the counts against him (under the head of seditious libels), was the publication during the strike of certain vivid passages from the prophet Isaiah about those who "decreed unrighteous decrees"¹⁸⁰

In the trial of the remaining seven men, the Crown counsel went out of his way to accuse William Ivens of sympathy with Tom Mooney, "that bomb thrower," as though, declared Ivens, "President Wilson had not asked for amnesty and a fair trial for Mooney." At another point in the trial an article was adduced by the Crown as a cause of the riot, counsel alleging that the "blood of the man who was shot" was upon "the head of the writer of that article." The writer in question retorted by proof that the article so adduced had been written after and not before

the riot! To the very end the tense feelings and drama of the strike itself surrounded the trials. A near riot occurred when the verdict was announced. It was first mistakenly reported that the accused man had been acquitted, and a wild cheer broke from the crowd in the courtroom. Judge Metcalf instantly ordered the court cleared, but before the order could be obeyed, the verdict of guilty was announced. Hisses, cries, and hoots greeted the announcement, and the court was cleared with great difficulty by a squad of constables. Of the seven, only Alderman Heaps was found not guilty on all counts. Bray, the returned soldier, was sentenced to six months, and the remaining five to one year's imprisonment.⁸¹

Strike or Revolution?

Professor D.C. Masters, whose excellent book on the Winnipeg General Strike was published in 1950, raises the question whether the Winnipeg walk-out was really a "revolution" or merely a mass, sympathetic strike. The post-war reaction of most men in 1919 was to turn from concentration on defeating the German Empire to the redress of their own national and industrial "wrongs." To the returned soldiers it was often summed up in the one word "alien." To trade union members it was the open shop and the steadily rising cost of living. "There was some real suffering in Winnipeg...according to both royal commissions the feeling of grievance was increased by the 'ostentatious display of wealth'.... The housing problem was acute.... Finally, according to the Robson Commission, labour resented the refusal of many employers to accept collective bargaining."⁸²

The One Big Union Convention at Calgary had given many labor men new hope and the widespread discontent was fanned to flames by the speeches and resolutions at that convention. It should not be forgotten that in 1917-19 the imperialist and tyrannical behavior of Soviet Russia had not yet made itself felt in the minds of most American labor leaders. Masters argues cogently that if the Winnipeg Leaders' ultimate aim was the O.B.U. and "revolution" then the Winnipeg general strike was the "wildest folly," in that it was gravely premature. Moreover, if the general strike was intended to take over the nation's industries, there should have been more evidence of preparation. In fact, there was longer and more careful preparation for the Seattle general strike than for the Winnipeg walk-out, even

though Seattle's strike was barely one-seventh as long as that in Winnipeg.

Again, the strike leaders in Winnipeg never once made any effort to arm their followers.⁸³ All disorder was strictly against the instructions of the leaders and the repeated advice of the strike newspaper. For the first three weeks of the strike the leaders were amazingly successful in keeping most of the strikers at home, away from the emotional temptation to organize or attend mass meetings or huge parades.

Finally, the strike would never have lasted as it did had not leaders expressed the deepest feelings of the strikers. It was not a case of a small group of labor bosses compelling their unwilling victims to keep on the picket line. Says Masters: "In short, the strike was the result of a unanimous movement within the ranks of Winnipeg labour and was not instigated merely by a small radical group."⁸⁴

After careful balancing of the pros and cons Professor Masters concludes: "...there was no seditious conspiracy...the strike was what it purported to be, an effort to secure the principle of collective bargaining."⁸⁵

Chapter VI

GREAT BRITAIN IN 1926: Part I¹

A short while after the end of the British general strike of 1926 a young American professor of Economics, interviewing the top officials of the British Coal Mining Association, asked a very naive question: "If" he said, "coal mining in England is so very sick, why do you operators resist proposals to nationalize the industry?" The atmosphere fell far below zero as the coal owner snapped back: "If you've got influenza you don't commit suicide." But that is precisely what the majority of the coal owners did, as seen from the safe heights of subsequent history. If they did not also drag down with them the whole industrial fabric of the British Isles, it was no thanks to them. Nor, for that matter, was it thanks to the conservative miners' leaders, who allowed themselves to be bull-dozed by a small crowd of young rebel left-wingers like A. J. Cook, the Miners' Union secretary.

A previous chapter has shown how Benbow, the first modern theorist on general strikes, never got to first base with his Chartist supporters, despite his widespread propaganda on the "Grand National Holiday." It further described the bitter experience of Richard Pilling, textile worker and strike leader, whose "Plug Plot" came as near to a genuine general strike as anything in Europe or Asia before 1900. It was perhaps singularly fitting that Great Britain, the home of the Industrial Revolution and the source of general strike thinking and practice, should stage a nine-day economic national strike of a sympathetic character; a strike so intense, so wide-spread and so orderly despite the vital issues at stake, that it is hard to find in world history a like sample, except in Sweden in 1909. Seattle was short and localized. Winnipeg was long and ended in violence. San Francisco was born in bloodshed and left behind it fierce hatreds between the regular run of labor leaders and the small handful of Communists and their followers.

Sweden and Britain

In some aspects Sweden's economic strike of 1909 and Britain's of 1926 were much alike. The preparations for the great strike were made, not by organized labor, but by the employers

or the government. In both cases a lock-out or the threat of a lock-out was the actual challenge. In both strikes the ranks of the workers were far more enthusiastic about the actual solidarity of the walk-out than were their leaders, who desperately sought to end the strike before the penalty had to be paid of the complete collapse of the labor movement. (H.G.Wells' *Meanwhile* (1927) is a novel written around the British general strike, giving vivid glimpses of middle-class and labor reactions to the strike and its aftermath.) In each strike the responsible national organization of labor bore the full weight of the strike's conduct, although until then it had not received an equivalent national authority. Finally, in each instance the public played a very important part; in Sweden with the Public Security Brigade and in Britain with the Organization for the Maintenance of Supplies.

Unlike Sweden, however, Britain had experienced no other general strike for over eighty years. True, it had come measurably close to one several times between 1919 and 1926. British labor's Council of Action, for instance, threatened its use in 1920, when rumor had it that Britain was about to make war against Soviet Russia. British labor, right and left alike, was strongly against a new war and threatened a general strike if one materialized. A Council of Action was formed in August 1920. It was composed of five representatives from each of the three groups, the Trades Union Congress, the labor members of Parliament and the Labor Party, together with nine co-opted members. The Council of Action was to remain in existence until: (1) the government guaranteed no war against Russia; (2) the blockade on Russia was lifted; (3) the Soviet Government was recognized and trade re-established. The labor press announced "All power to the Council of Action" just as the Russian revolutionaries in 1917 had cried "All power to the Soviets." Labor's success in pressuring the government for the above demands led to the fading out of the Council of Action (and the local Councils of Action in the various cities of Britain). The Council of Action was never dissolved. It just ceased to exist. But it was not forgotten, either by labor or by the conservative governments that followed its demise.

In 1919 most workers found their real wages lower than in pre-war days. As the short post-war boom passed, unemployment grew rapidly. Great war-weariness on the part of both factory worker and returned soldier produced an almost

revolutionary unrest. The general strike, which had been tried and found wanting in the days of the Chartists, now came to be accepted by large numbers of young British workers as an invincible labor weapon.

On June 25, 1919, two days after the publication of Justice Sankey's Report on the Coal Industry, which had advocated nationalization of the mines, the British Labor Party met in its first assembly since the war. The majority of labor's political leaders, contrary to the young minority of labor, doubted the use of the general strike for political ends. Before long, they held, the Labor Party itself would be in power and a general strike then might well be a dangerous class weapon against a labor government.

The Triple Alliance (Miners, Railwaymen, Transport Workers)

Late in September 1919 one of the three component parts of the Triple Alliance jumped the gun on its comrades. A sudden and drastic stoppage occurred on the railroads. That railroad strike had considerable effect upon both the unions and the Government when it came to the actual nation-wide general strike of 1926. World War I had forced Government control and coordination of the 130 British railroad companies, and it was with the Government that the rail unions conducted their negotiations for wage standardization. The unions learned that a wage cut for all classes of rail labor was in preparation by the Government. All union men recognized that if their wages were cut all other unions would soon find themselves in the same situation. In short, the railroad workers in 1919 were in the same plight as the miners in 1926, first in line for a wage cut.

The essence of the Triple Alliance had been the plan of common action. Yet here was unilateral action, sudden and unexpected to the Miners and the Transport Workers. Why had the railroadmen jumped the gun? The most probable answer includes two facts. In the first place the Miners were expecting the Triple Alliance to get behind their demand for Justice Sankey's proposal of nationalization of the coal mines. The second fact was the essential difference between the coal miners on the one side — who could never be intimidated by strike-breakers in their industry — and on the other side the ease with which substitute labor could be thrown into trucking, dock work or railroad service. Never, to the end of the story, did the miners appear to understand this vital difference.

It is clear that the rail leaders disliked the thought of striking for nationalization of the mines, when their own union members would be likely to lose seniority if not their jobs by breaking contracts to join in a "general" strike. Their leaders saw equally clearly the importance of surprise in their strike against the Government. A long strike would be impossible and a long warning to the Government or to the Triple Alliance would be fatal. Moreover, if the rail men won and prevented a wage cut, the gain would be for all. So the railroadmen's strike was supported by conservative leaders, lest the young rebels in the industry run away with control of the strike.

Under threat of a strike of all trades at least a temporary victory for the railroadmen was obtained from the Government. Wages were stabilized at their current rates for twelve months. The lesson that this occurrence taught both government and labor was that neither railroads nor railroadmen were as indispensable as had been thought. Under the government's plan London and all large cities had faced the problem of stoppage of commuters' trains by mobilizing every conceivable mode of road transport. The Government's achievement was a real surprise to the railroadmen. A second lesson was to be learned from this threat of a general walk-out. A few properly trained men, with the aid of willing volunteers, were able to run skeleton services and handle essential machinery without undue damage or accident, for at least a brief period of time.

The use of the general strike once again was considered in 1921 when the coal miners faced a governmental decontrol of their industry and the coal owners threatened a wage cut. The miners, like the railroadmen in 1919, wished to keep the nation-wide method of negotiation for wages; the mine-owners demanded the old method of district wage patterns. How stubborn and stupid the owners could be in a matter of this kind can be seen by their lock-out of April 1, 1921. Every worker in the pits received a lock-out notice, including the absolutely essential "safety men" who always were kept at work even during a strike. The owners and the Government soon recognized this fatal mistake but the miners, up in arms at the owners' attitude, let the notices take their course. On the last day of March the miners asked aid of the rest of the Triple Alliance.

A special meeting of the Transport Workers Federation decided to give "all the assistance in their power to whatever extent was necessary" and their executive was authorized to

spend two thousand pounds in advertising the cause of the miners in the leading newspapers. The miners yielded on the "safety men" and the Government promised financial assistance to "mitigate the rapid reduction of wages in the districts most severely affected." This offer was rejected by the miners and the Triple Alliance agreed that "only one honorable course remained open" — a general strike on Friday April 14. On the very last day before the strike Frank Hodges, then Miners' secretary, was trapped by a group of members of Parliament into making a concession that was at once misinterpreted by the press as a cancellation of the general strike order.

Friday, "Black Friday" as it became known to labor, saw a fatal split between the miners and the two other groups of the Triple Alliance. The miners turned down the offer of the Government and mine-owners and went off to their own headquarters to draft a reply, leaving the Transport Workers with a strike call out for that very night, utterly horrified at the situation, and at the manner in which the Miners were completely ignoring the position in which they had placed their two partners. For this reason the Transport Workers called off the strike. In reality, from the very start, the Triple Alliance had never acted as a single body. The Railwaymen had set a bad precedent in 1919 of jumping the gun on their partners. The Miners now had done the same thing. Somehow their minds refused to grasp the patent fact that a government can easily break a strike of transport or railway workers, of dockworkers and sailors, but that it is virtually impossible to crush a mine strike by the armed forces. This lesson was not learned by the miners and in 1926 it was one of the main reasons for the final failure of the general strike.

Subsidy or Strike ?

In no other industry besides coal has British history piled up such a tale of embittered feelings, of long and stubborn conflicts, of lack of economic common sense and of irreconcilable viewpoints. From 1919 to 1926 no less than four separate important government inquiries were made into the industry and valuable reports published, none of which were whole-heartedly accepted by the Government in power, even when a solemn pledge was given, as in the case of the Sankey Commission of 1919. The cost of the broken pledge was paid by the workers and the people of Britain long after the fall of the Triple Alliance, just

described. In 1924 Lord Buckmaster's Commission found that miners were worse off than in 1914 in terms of real wages, whereas owners' profits were substantially in excess of pre-war profits.

In 1925, with coal going from bad to worse as a business, the Miners' Federation and the Mining Association formed a joint committee to discuss the facts, the causes and the remedies for the industry's depressed condition. The first step was well considered. The causes and remedies brought deadlock. The high cost of coal production was at fault, said the owners, this high cost being largely due to the seven-hour day and the current wage agreement. The owners gave notice of termination of contracts July 31, 1925. They demanded an eight-hour day and wages decided on a local level, with minimum wages no longer given preference over profits. The reduction in wage rates entailed varied from 13 per cent to as much as 28 per cent.

Naturally the miners turned down the owners' offer and the Trades Union Congress protested the nature of the offer. Most people expected the miners to yield, for their treasury was empty and a quarter of their membership was out of work. The world was over-produced in coal, and many coal exporting lands were in the same plight as Britain. The eight hour proposal would have added to inventory rather than have lowered costs.

Lacking any organization such as the Triple Alliance, the miners were forced to apply to the T. U. C. (Trades Union Congress). Late in July a special committee of the General Council of the T. U. C. decided that in the event of a coal stoppage on August 1 the Railroad and Transport Workers would handle no coal. If any rail worker were dismissed because of this all the railwaymen would be involved. It is significant that such a decision was made in spite of the fact that the radical Miners' Federation secretary, A. J. Cook, in his speeches was constantly attacking J. H. Thomas, head of the National Union of Railwaymen, and well-known member of Parliament. At this critical moment the Macmillan Court of Inquiry made its report, endorsing the miners' claim for a minimum wage and declaring the industry's need for reorganization in the interest of efficiency.

This report added fuel to the flames. The owners resented the report's references to improvement in the industry's efficiency. The railwaymen had their orders to handle no coal as of August 1. The public looked to the government for action: if the owners refused to withdraw their lock-out notices then the

government must take over the mines as in war-time. On July 29 Mr. Baldwin, Premier of the Conservative Government, told the miners that there would be no subsidy, coal must stand on its own economic feet. The Miners' secretary admitted that only a miracle could prevent a general strike.

A miracle was forthcoming. A general strike in such a time of economic depression and widespread unrest had too many possibilities to be permitted and the government felt that at all costs it must be prevented. At two o'clock in the morning of the last day of grace, since the miners had expressed willingness to study all possible methods of improving the productive power of the industry, the Government agreed to render assistance to the industry until the spring. The Government asked the owners to withdraw their lock-out notices for two weeks in order that the required discussions might proceed as to the way in which this temporary subsidy might best be applied. In such a last minute manner was the general strike avoided, and the subsidy was dated to run until May 1, 1926. In the meantime the wages actually paid were to be "not less than the minimum provided under the 1924 agreement."

The very newspaper that caused the actual beginning of the general strike in 1926, the Daily Mail, now venomously attacked Premier Baldwin for yielding to a band of conspirators. Mr. Lloyd George, whose pledge to put the Sankey Report into effect had been broken in 1919, called the general strike threat "a very successful hold-up of the community." On the other side of the picture was the "lunatic fringe" of organized labor, in this instance exemplified by the miners' secretary, A.J. Cook, who assured his hearers that but for the subsidy "there would otherwise have been a revolution." The miners, and the labor movement with them, were elated at what they regarded as a great victory. Undoubtedly it was the exhibition of labor solidarity that finally broke down the Government's reluctance to grant a subsidy. But that was not the whole story. The strike emergency organization was not ready, and Mr. Baldwin was only too well aware of this. It was the properly trained personnel that was lacking in August of 1925, but was present in May 1926. Public opinion would have been with the Government, in all probability, but it would have been insufficiently organized. The New York Times pointed out more than once in its editorials at that time that by May 1 of 1926 the British Government must form some such organization as did the citizens of Sweden in

1909. And that precisely is what the British Government did.

Preparing for the Emergency

Before May 1, 1926, preparation for a possible general strike took three forms, but none of them by official organizations of labor, lest such action should bring fear to the public and so stand in the way of all reasonable negotiations between the coal operators and the miners. On the extreme right there developed a group called the British Fascists. These groups raided communist meetings; kidnapped Harry Pollitt, communist and prominent leader of the "Minority Movement" in labor. This Fascist organization declared that it would remain "constitutional" as long as the government did its duty. It admitted to weekly drill and was said to have found its financial resources from citizens' committees federated as a Central Council of Economic Leagues. This Council included some five hundred leading industrial firms and was headed by three men, one of whom was a mine owner known all over Britain. Generally looked upon as quite as far right as the communists were far left, occasionally the British Fascists even persuaded a city Police Chief to accept them as "specials" under their own officers.²

A less partisan and more responsible organization was established under the title Organization for the Maintenance of Supplies, or the O. M. S. as it was called. It was a voluntary body, received no public funds; it registered volunteers, investigated their "security" background and, where needed, trained them for special tasks in the public service. Its purpose was to provide the government with the needed personnel when public services were in peril of stoppage. By May 1, 1926, the O. M. S. was able to present the government with a roster of one hundred thousand volunteers. To train truck and bus drivers the O. M. S. bought its own vehicles and made use of certain factory testing grounds that had high walls around them. The training took place over week-ends, when regular workers were not in the plants. The same degree of training was given to personnel who would take over telephone or telegraph service in case of a strike. The president of O. M. S. indicated that the British Fascists would have had to give up their quasi-military formation before O. M. S. would have cooperated with them.

As early as February 1926 the British Home Secretary announced: "If the emergency arises... we are ready, and if necessary the control of the transport of the country will be taken

over by the Government." What, then, was this third line of preparation? It originated during the Railroad strike of 1919, described above, and was widely used at that time. The same organization was ready in April 1921, had the Triple Alliance actually achieved a general strike. Of course, in 1926, virtually none of the wartime powers and wartime stocks of food and army vehicles were still in the Government's hands. So the Government had to rely upon voluntary aid. One hundred fifty haulage committees were formed by the haulage contractors of the nation. By this method the consumers of the nation rather than the Government bore most of the cost of emergency transport. (Milk rose four cents a quart.) The Government's job consisted in training and holding in reserve a supply of truck and bus drivers. Once the volunteer had a job his expense was lifted to the shoulders of the particular contractor and the consumer. Furthermore, the country was organized into ten divisions and headquarters, each with its own regional commanding officer, so that each of the ten regions would, if necessary, act as an autonomous unit, once the orders to mobilize went out from the Government in London. When the strike broke out prices were stabilized as of April 30, 1926, with extra charge for transport. This was accomplished by the voluntary agreement of the various trades and the agreement was well kept.³

The local authorities were responsible for running the public utilities, and for the local distribution of coal, but they were not expected to be responsible for the local distribution of food. Arising out of the Government's planning of transport it was held that truck convoys were unwise as offering a concentrated target for the strikers. Wide diffusion of the food trucks meant that large numbers would get through the picket lines. During the last week of April the Government's "Commissioners" at the head of the ten road divisions were all in their respective cities with everything ready for the final "action" telegram from London. The wisdom of the delegation of authority to local trucking contractors was shown by the relatively small loss of trucks in 1926, contrasted with 1919, when many a truck load was taken out by a driver from the Government supply depots and was never seen again! In 1926 each haulage contractor was responsible for his own property and for any extra trucks loaned to him. Such, then, in brief, was the preparation of the Government's emergency transport, for which nine months of coal subsidy had been paid.

On the other side of the coin, the lack of labor preparation, there is evidence in plenty that the General Council (the "Executive Committee") of the Trades Union Congress did not sit down to draft the strike plans until they were called together on April 27, 1926. From that date to May 1 official labor had to improvise as best they could their mechanism for conducting the general strike. Despite the frenetic efforts of the "Minority Movement" in the labor ranks the responsible leaders of the trade unions and the Labor Party had put all their efforts into finding a solution of the mining problem honorable and satisfactory to all sides. In contrast A. J. Cook in mid-April could say: "My last word to the Government is: Count the cost. The cost of a strike of the miners would mean the end of capitalism. . . . This is a war to the death, and it is your death they are after."

Causes of the Great Strike

There is no need here to follow the prolonged discussions that took place between the coal operators and the Miners' Union, and between the T. U. C. General Council and the Baldwin Cabinet during the hectic days from March 11, 1926, when the Samuel Royal Commission on the Coal Mines made its report, and May 1, the date set by the coal operators for the lock-out. Three important facts stood out in any effort to understand the causes of the general strike. The first was the intransigence of both miners and coal owners, with stubbornness to the point of stupidity on the part of the operators, when they virtually ignored those important provisos in Sir Herbert Samuel's Report that the industry must be reorganized before the miners should be expected to render large sacrifices. To the last the mine owners were interested alone in wage cuts and longer hours, thus forcing the hands of every self-respecting labor leader outside the coal industry. "Eye-wash" was their term for the Samuel Commission's recommendations.

The miners, on the other hand, made it hard if not impossible for the General Council of the T. U. C. to undertake effective negotiations with the Government in their behalf. To the end their demands were no pay cut and no longer hours, with national rather than district wage contracts. What made the miners particularly hard to handle was the Minority Movement, which was plainly left-wing and which had the full support of the small but energetic British Communist Party. This Minority Movement gathered some 880 delegates in conference in March

1926, to "mobilize the forces of the working class" for the impending general strike and to stiffen the already obdurate leadership of the miners against any compromise with the owners.⁴

The second fact concerns the Baldwin Cabinet, which was far from guiltless in relation to the onrushing crisis. Previously it had rejected solutions proposed by the two latest Royal Commissions on the Coal industry. On the last day before the lock-out Premier Baldwin presented to the miners the owners' offer involving a 13.5 per cent cut in the standard wages and an eight-hour day where seven had been the standard. From the Government there could have been expected some real recognition of the recommendations of the Samuel Commission, since it had been specially appointed by the Baldwin Government. Yet all that Baldwin offered was legislation to give effect to "such of the proposals in the Report as we believe will be of benefit to the industry," and that only "provided that those engaged in this industry agree to accept the Report." Knowing the attitude of the mine operators on the Samuel Report, this was sheer mockery on the part of the Government.

The third point in the causation of the general strike had to do with the leaders of organized labor outside the ranks of the miners. They were in no mood to face a bitter class struggle for men reluctant even to trust them with full power to negotiate, yet they dared not allow the mine owners and the Government to railroad the powerful Miners' Federation into lower wages, longer hours and district competition in "minimum" wages. Not, that is, unless they were prepared to see the rest of organized labor threatened with the same fate. Among the leaders, outside the miners, were men of very varied opinions on the general strike. Ramsay MacDonald, top political leader, had no use for the weapon which, he felt, always damaged labor more than it harmed others. Men like J.H. Thomas, of the Railwaymen, were appalled at the thought of a psychological if not a physical civil war that might result if a really effective strike should occur. When the strike ended J.H. Thomas publicly admitted that what he had dreaded most about a general strike in sympathy with the miners was the possibility of the struggle getting out of the hands of those who were "able to exercise some control." The Communists were few, so that what Thomas really feared was what the labor union ranks might do under the incitement of the Minority Movement, once the general strike really got started. And when three million strikers were involved

that was no small matter for worry. With such views common among the General Council of the T. U. C. and the upper echelons of the union officials, it is not surprising that there was little if any labor preparation for a general strike until late in April.

Contrasts: 1919 and 1926

If ever there was a period in the history of Britain during the twentieth century when a bold appeal to all the other workers by the coal miners would have been answered with almost instant support, 1919 was that year. Police strikes in England and America, with general strikes in Seattle and Winnipeg, indicated the tone and temperament of the workers immediately after World War I. A temporary trade boom played into the hands of rebellious labor, and the government with trepidation felt keenly the unrest among soldiers and workers.

The situation which faced labor was utterly different in May, 1926. A long period of poor trade and falling wages; a prolonged use of the unemployment insurance scheme by scores of thousands; a fall in union membership from over eight millions to just over five; a brief but educative experience of the Labor Party in office; followed by an extremely conservative government in power by an overwhelming Parliamentary majority — not one of these conditions made for a militant adoption of a general strike by the majority of trade union or Labor Party leaders. Not even the apparent victory over the government in the summer of 1925 strengthened faith in the general strike as a really practical weapon. The very fact that the small group of Communists had tried to get the T. U. C. to call a special meeting through which labor could give far more authority to the General Council acted as a brake upon any such proposal by any conservative labor man or union. Similarly the left-wing demand that a Workers' Defense Corps be formed, in answer to the O. M. S. and the British Fascists, met with nothing but condemnation by the General Council and the Labor Party. The General Council seemed to have moved away from the miners' slogan "Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day" by admitting that the publication of Sir Herbert Samuel's Report had at least "rendered a declaration of purely negative policy unwise."

In the meantime the Minority Movement had held a meeting of mine delegates and had resolved to "work vigorously and perseveringly for the full and complete rejection of the Royal Coal Commission Report." The assembled delegates demanded

nationalization of the mining industry without compensation and with workers' control.⁵ The Miners' Lodge (or local) was the basic labor unit in the coal industry. The county associations were made up of these Lodges. The Miners' Federation consisted of a score of these county or district associations. When, therefore, a lively but minority group gained control of the Lodges it was often able to tie the hands of the Miners' Federation Executive. This, undoubtedly, was true of the situation in 1926.

In the face of such seeming refusal by miners and mine operators to consider the Royal Commission Report as a whole, with stress upon the need for reorganization, the objective student found a valuable contribution to sanity in the last days of April. Sir Richard Redmayne, technical adviser to the British Controller of Coal Mines during the war, and one-time Chief Inspector of Mines, expressed himself as "firmly convinced that the coal mining industry of Great Britain can be placed on a profitable basis, and that in the not distant future, but to accomplish this, drastic reorganization will be required, the first move being in the direction of the combination of the collieries into groups of like natural conditions and of conditions of trade."⁶ Neither Government nor Coal operators heeded this expert bit of advice.

The Fateful Decision

On Saturday, May 1, the Executives of the T.U.C. constituent unions met for the fatal decision: should all power during the emergency be placed in the hands of the General Council of the T.U.C.? The chairman emphasized the fact that the Miners' Federation had agreed to "hand over to the General Council the conduct of the dispute." The roll call of the union Executives followed and the vote of union members so represented was over 3,653,000 in favor of the general strike, against 50,000, with a membership of 319,000 not heard from. The news of these figures was received with great enthusiasm by vast labor crowds conducting Labor Day parades. Decision was made to call the general strike on Tuesday morning, May 4, if the coal settlement had not then been made. It was with the knowledge of this vote that the union negotiators struggled to get the lock-out notices of the coal operators suspended, so that unhampered discussions might continue.

Two vitally important difficulties stemmed from this meeting

and the vote of the union Executives. The first was the subsequent discovery that the Miners' Federation considered that they had not handed over the power of settlement of their conflict to the General Council. If that were really the correct statement of events it meant that the unions had handed over their collective power to the Miners' Federation to do what they would with it. The second grave problem that arose out of the Executives' meeting was the speech by Ernest Bevin, head of the Transport Workers, on behalf of the General Council. He was referring to the mobilization order of the O.M.S. of which he had a copy: "We are not declaring war upon the people. War has been declared by the Government. . . . We have said that there is no need for the O.M.S. We are prepared to distribute essential foodstuffs. We offer to do it under a volunteer arrangement organized by the Trade Unions involved, and to see to it that that distribution, however long the struggle lasts, is an equitable one. . . ."7 This plan to feed the people gave untold trouble to local strike committees at the outset of the struggle and was almost completely ignored by the Government, which of course had its own plan.

The representatives of the T.U.C. on Sunday, May 2, were still in negotiation with Prime Minister Baldwin, urging the immediate withdrawal of the lock-out notices by the coal operators, when the Government was informed that the machine men of the Daily Mail, without union authorization, had refused to print an editorial about the threatened strike.⁸ At this point the Government, without waiting to discover how responsible for this interference with the press were the T.U.C. leaders, handed them an ultimatum: the overt act had occurred; the general strike had actually started: no further discussion of any sort would thereafter take place until the T.U.C. unconditionally cancelled the general strike orders.

Here then was the overt act, the "cause" which the Government avidly had seized upon. It was like the Alpine lad's "piping" but not the real cause of the "avalanche." The real, long-time causes of the general strike could be found in the respective attitudes of coal miners and operators, of the Government and the rest of Britain's labor leaders who had a keen memory of labor-management relations dating all the way back to the first World War.

Chapter VII

GREAT BRITAIN IN 1926: Part II ¹

Once the general strike call had gone out it became even more apparent how unprepared were both leaders and ranks. Propaganda by press and Government ran riot. Yet the strike was far more complete and inclusive than the rail strike of 1919. Its apparent success helped hasten its cancellation, for fear that it would get out of control. Thus it happened that the leaders declared an end to the mass walk-out, but the ranks stayed out for at least a further twenty-four hours. The cost of the struggle was immense and lasting, in the loss of union rights, in money and in savage legislative reprisals. When all is said, what part did the Communists play? And what of British labor's humor and tolerance, even in the heat of the conflict?

Unprepared and Proud of It

The great majority of the T. U. C. General Council did not desire the great strike; were, in short, unprepared and proud of it. The increasing public tendency of the Government to take the coal-owner's standpoint (as already shown) and the determination of the more reactionary members of the Baldwin Government to force a preliminary acceptance of a wage cut on the part of the miners prevented a last moment effort on the part of the General Council to find a "formula" which would have enabled the cancellation of the general strike call. Even on Monday, May 3, a futile attempt was made in the House of Commons to come to some agreement, despite the Daily Mail "ultimatum."

The organized workers themselves seem to have been quite unprepared for the strike decision. All sorts of minor strikes were on foot or actually in process in the engineering trades and on the railroads, none of which was even remotely related to the general strike situation. An occasional "wild cat" stay-in strike was in process. This unpreparedness of ranks and leaders alike had results little short of disastrous. The instructions issued on May 1 by the separate Union Executives were confused in their content, where they were not actually in conflict with instructions to other unions in the same industry. The food distribution problem, already referred to, would have been

greater than it was but for the Government's haughty refusal to have any 'partnership with a rival Government.'² The writer had occasion to interview local strike committee members throughout industrial Britain shortly after the strike. From their comments it was evident that local machinery for the coordination of the various unions involved had to be improvised as the strike proceeded, and that it took three or four days of strike before that machinery was functioning at its best; four days lost in a struggle where time was the very essence of victory. The amazing thing is the degree to which local union wisdom and initiative met these grave problems.

The General Council advised each union to attend to the strike call for its own members, to keep rosters of the members on strike, or exempted, and to see that none of its striking members should "blackleg" their fellow workers in some other town or city. Aware of possible clashing of instructions, the General Council proposed that one of the important functions of the many Trades Councils (City Centrals in U. S. A.) would be to coordinate national headquarters' orders, and secondly to organize trades unionists for the most effective preservation of peace and order. Further orders from the General Council had to do with warning against labor spies and agents provocateurs who would try to incite striking workers to violence, and with the agreement that there would be no resumption of work until all existing union contracts were recognized afresh by employers. The absolute failure to get this assurance when the strike was finally called off by the General Council was one of the gravest indictments against it for its handling of the struggle.

By Monday afternoon, May 3, the three railway unions and the Transport Union came to an agreement that in all parts of the Kingdom an "absolute stoppage of traffic of every kind" must be achieved. The railroad companies, in contrast to the mine owners, used psychology in their appeal to employees and to the public. In the first place they printed side by side on railroad posters the railroad unions' strike call and the companies' appeal. The right of the individual conscience to decide was recognized, but the appeal not to break long-term contracts with the company was also stressed. Through the press the companies warned the public that service curtailment would be unavoidable if the strike occurred; that in such an event all rail tickets would be available by any route on which trains were running. Appeals for consideration of the general public were

made to the employees of the London Underground and the London General Omnibus Company.

Propaganda

Now that the general strike call had gone out, and the Government had refused further negotiations until the strike was unconditionally cancelled, propaganda ran riot. The Morning Post, owned by the Duke of Northumberland, also a major owner of coal lands, bore the scare-head on the billboards "Zinovieff Wins." Mr. Lloyd George, the one-time Prime Minister, who, in 1919, had called the rail strikers "anarchists," now declared that he had never seen the workers of Britain in a mood less inclined for revolution and that the accusation of Bolshevism against them was "dishonest slosh." The General Council pointed out that they were seeking the same conditions for negotiations for both parties, freedom from either strike or lock-out. The Prime Minister himself, alluding to the Daily Mail incident, said that on Sunday night the Government had found itself challenged by a rival government, and that rival government ignorant of the way in which its orders were being carried out and incapable of preventing disobedience. The Premier had some support in his claim, since the Daily Mail was again prevented from publication on the morning of May 4 because it called for the immediate arrest of the "principals in the conspiracy against the liberty of the British nation." This separate, unofficial and unauthorized strike against the Daily Mail, the Evening News, the Evening Standard and the Star had nothing to do with the general strike orders to stop all newspapers from May 4 onward, but it had a serious effect on public opinion toward the larger conflict. The greatest loss to the strikers from the order to close the press was the absence of effective journals through which the more moderate opinion could be communicated. Even the appeal of the Archbishop of Canterbury was withheld from the official organ of the Government, the British Gazette, until the strike was over.

Governmental orders poured forth on the eve of the strike. All export of coal was stopped. Ships with coal cargoes were ordered back to port; Emergency restrictions with regard to fuel and light were issued. All Army leave was stopped. Special constables were enrolled. There was little show of military force, except on the London docks where soldiers on a food convoy were armed to the teeth, but the Navy was widely used in

the various ports.³ Hyde Park was closed to the public, and was used as a vast reserve for auto trucks, furniture vans and milk carts. The O.M.S. handed over its vast roster of personnel to the Volunteer Service Committees in the various towns and cities.

Extent of the Strike

The general strike of 1926 was far more complete in the stoppage of all transport than was the rail strike of 1919. Bus and street-car, train and subway ("Underground"), workers on the docks and wharves and in power stations, all were on strike, in addition to employees in the less strategic trades such as steel, building construction, and heavy chemicals. The sight of the suburban commuter struggling to his job on Tuesday, May 4, is something that has been recorded in all the journals of Britain and many foreign papers. By the afternoon of the first day of the general strike the jam was so intense that traffic moved at one mile an hour. Three hundred independent buses ran on the first day. By the third there were only forty, so tight were the picket lines. The London General Omnibus Company did not move a single vehicle on the first day – again because the picket lines were too strong around the bus garages. Even on the last day only 1,272 out of the 4,400 London General buses were running. In the Subways the normal 315 train units fell to 15, and at the end of the strike were still only 105 units.

On the railroads skilled workers and even the supervisory and clerical staffs went out. Of the trained locomotive engineers in one of the largest rail companies, only 1.5 per cent reported for service on the first day. In another company over 94 per cent of the signal staff quit. On one road passenger trains rose from 3.8 to 12.2 per cent of normal between the first and ninth day of the strike; on another, the figures were 3.7 to 19.2. Freight service lagged far behind passenger. In freight the figures rose from 1 per cent to 3 per cent of normal. Another road had a range of 1 to 8.4 per cent; a third had only 2.2 per cent of normal on May 11. Much was made of the weakening of the railroadmen as the strike proceeded, especially in the official British Gazette. Analysis of the Ministry of Transport data does not bear out that claim.

The most surprising figures had to do with the white collar rail workers, many of whom were not even members of the Railway Clerks' Association. The white collar turnout varied from

95 per cent in Liverpool to 50 per cent in York. Perhaps the most important evidence of the continued solidarity of the rail workers, white collar or otherwise, is contained in the final refusal of the men to return to work, after the general strike had been called off until less humiliating conditions from their companies had been assured (see below, "The Ranks Stand Fast"). The British Broadcasting Company in the last few days of the strike added its evidence by constantly referring to the continued lack of any "collapse" among the strikers. At ten o'clock on May 13, twenty-two hours after the General Council had informed the Government of its cancellation of the general strike, the B. B. C. announced that as far as London was concerned the calling off of the strike had made little difference with the traffic, since few of the strikers had returned to work and the volunteers were still running what vehicles were on the streets. The northern and industrial centers of Britain were reported as even more "solid" in their reluctance to go back to work until they were more sure of how they would be received.

Why the Strike Was Cancelled

The horrifying accusation against the General Council of waging civil war was constantly in the minds of the labor leaders. Daily the unions' strike funds dwindled, to the distress of the unions' executives. These facts and the miners' absolute refusal to compromise, even on the basis of the "Samuel Memorandum" finally convinced the T. U. C. that nothing more could be gained by continuing the general strike. That the Council ended the struggle by unconditional surrender was in great part due to the irreconcilable attitude of the Miners' Federation.

From the outset of the strike the Government had thought and spoken of the struggle as civil war, as an attempt to set up a rival government, in short, as revolution. It was a political strike, no longer against the mine owners, but against democratically elected government itself, whether national or local. The British Gazette, Winston Churchill's brain-child, issued from the Morning Post office while the general strike lasted, spoke of the strikers as "the enemy." No amount of repetition by men like J. H. Thomas that the conflict was "merely a plain, economic, industrial dispute" had any effect on the stand taken by the Government. The General Council's organ during the strike, the British Worker (not Communist; the Workers' Bulletin was Communist), played all the changes on the theme of a

plain, ordinary, economic strike. In fact the reality of the charge that a rival government was being set up by the T. U. C. was evidenced by the whole problem of what exemptions should be made from the strike orders. Since this issue of a "rival government" will be treated at some length in the chapter to follow on "The Logic of the General Strike," it is sufficient at this point to indicate that the union leaders grew increasingly more unhappy as the days passed and their members stood firm. And this unhappiness stemmed from several reasons. First on the list was the genuine doubt of the General Council as to how legal the general strike might be. In this doubt they were supported by the widely quoted views of men like the Liberal M. P. Sir John Simon, or Mr. Justice Astbury. Sir John held that the general strike was not against employers but against the general public, to make it, Parliament and the Government do something. Those who called it were not revolutionaries, but were laboring under the confused idea that a general strike was a lawful exercise of the rights of organized labor.

Justice Astbury spared no pains to show how illegal he considered the strike to be. No trade dispute could or did exist between the T. U. C. on the one side and the Government and the nation on the other. The actions of the T. U. C. were plainly unlawful. The British Gazette ran headlines: "General Strike Illegal. Liability of Promoters. Government Considering Action" and implied that the General Council might be mulcted in their personal and private incomes for their part in the strike. The General Council, never at any time happy or enthusiastic about the general strike weapon, now desperately tried to reach an agreement with the miners' leaders that would justify calling off the strike and the resumption of negotiations.

These efforts at settlement were all the more urgent because the unions' funds were fast vanishing. The effect of this loss of strike funds could not be balanced by the deep loyalty of the ranks to their unions. A poverty-ridden labor movement is a labor movement bereft of much of its power. To the General Council, then, the arrival from Italy of the chairman of the latest Royal Commission on Coal, Sir Herbert Samuel, was a godsend. At Sir Herbert's request the Negotiating Committee of the General Council met with him and learned that his good offices were at their service, but that he had no official relationship with the Government. The T. U. C. gathered that it was the Commission's intention "to maintain the supremacy of national

negotiations and agreements, to preserve the seven hour day and to protect the wages of the lower-paid workers."

A proposal prepared by Sir Herbert was presented by the T. U. C. Industrial (Negotiating) Committee to the Miners' Federation as a basis for further discussions and for the cancellation of the general strike. Ultimately the Miners' Executive turned it down, as also a second "formula" on the next day, May 10. It seemed to the General Council that matters had become too serious to justify them being tied to a mere slogan. ("Not a minute on the Day, not a penny off the Pay.") The miners were not willing to proceed with the General Council on a common proposal. Had they done so there is no question but that the Baldwin Government would have been in a very awkward spot. Simultaneous withdrawal of the general strike order and the coal lock-out, hoped the General Council, would make it possible immediately to renew discussions on the basis of the Royal Commission proposals. Had the miners agreed, the T. U. C. Committee would have been able to see the Prime Minister that very evening, May 11. With the Miners' Executive hostile the T. U. C. Committee postponed the visit until Wednesday noon, and then had to cancel the general strike unconditionally, without even the assurance that all workers would be taken back without discrimination.

The Prime Minister would not even give any pledge that the miners' case would be reconsidered, or that the lock-out would be cancelled. There is no question that the General Council had based their hopes on the promise of Sir Herbert that he would strongly recommend to the Government his proposals for settlement, already discussed with the Council. Because of the miners' refusal the General Council had nothing with which to bargain. They went perforce in the guise of defeated combatants. Had they been able to assure the Premier that they bore with them the miners' acceptance of the Samuel proposals the situation would have been different. The Samuel proposals were a defeat for the mine owners, and the feelings of the British people at that moment were pro-miner and anti-owner. It would have been hard indeed for the Government to have refused to implement the Samuel Memorandum.

The chaos in labor's ranks that followed the publication of the General Council's defeat was indescribable. A. J. Cook announced that the Miners' Federation was "no party in any shape or form" to the T. U. C. decision to end the general strike.

This turned the sword in the wound. The multifarious sacrifices for the miners had come to nothing. But the ranks were far from clear that the miners themselves were very much a party to the cancellation, if only because they would not recognize the appalling position in which they were willing to leave all the rest of organized labor in Britain. Long months later the official report of the strike bore the following significant comment: "The strike was terminated for one sufficient reason only, namely, that in view of the attitude of the Miners' Federation its continuance would have rendered its purpose futile."⁴

The Ranks Stand Fast

The savage glee of labor's opponents helped to prolong the stoppage after the general strike had been officially called off. The union ranks stood fast; now for their own skins as much as for the plight of the miners. So emphatic was the refusal of the railwaymen to return to their posts under the humiliating conditions offered to them, that the railroad leaders had perforce to order the renewal of the strike. Simultaneously the O. M. S. volunteers made it plain that they were not willing to be used as tools to destroy organized labor.

The first and most immediate effect of the general strike's cancellation was the savage satisfaction with which certain groups of management and Government received the news. The Daily Mail's headline "Surrender of the Revolutionaries," referred to the T. U. C. as "a barely disguised Soviet hurriedly effacing itself." Employers in many industries, forgetting that they still had to deal with the ranks, through their separate unions and federations, took the term surrender as literal and attempted a counter-attack. Before the week was out they had discovered that the leaders' "surrender" was not identical with the rout of the ranks, and all sorts of denials were made as to their original intentions in reprisals. In Glasgow many large employers insisted at first on individual application for reinstatement. On the Glasgow docks the shipowners held out for making four hours' pay the minimum rate, whereas eight hours had previously been the standard. In many other places men were offered employment on condition that they tore up their union cards, and accepted a substantial reduction in wages. Cables to the New York press told of refusal of the London Underground and the General Omnibus Company to recognize seniority of the returning men.

On Thursday, May 13, Mr. J.H. Thomas stated in the House of Commons that one hundred thousand more workers were out on strike at the time he was speaking than when the General Council cancelled the strike order twenty-four hours earlier, despite the return to work on the part of some workers. The struggle for united reinstatement or a longer strike was one of the most startling pieces of information that met the writer in his study of available documents and his travel through the strike areas. At first the ranks were incredulous at the strike cancellation, then bewildered that the strike had failed, when with them it seemed in full swing. Finally a grim indignation swept the local headquarters, the pickets and the strikers that boded ill for continued discipline and respect for order.

Up until Wednesday, May 12, the strike had been a matter of loyalty to fellow workers in the coal mines, with no hope of gaining anything for themselves but criticism and possible loss of seniority, but the ranks had expected to be led back to work with the same unanimity with which they had obeyed the strike call. Now the General Council had cancelled the strike without protecting the ranks with assurance as to safe return to work. The Council's excuse was that it was better for each national union executive body to look after the details of return. Now, without warning, the strikers were thrown back upon their own individual unions, with the dreadful suspicion that the Miners' Federation had not agreed to the cancellation of the strike and that British labor's sacrifices had all been in vain. From all over the land irate telegrams poured into T.U.C. headquarters, saying that employers had threatened penalties for contract breaking, and demanding the General Council resume the general strike unless unconditional reinstatement was assured.

Thursday, May 13, was a black day for the public as well as for the strikers. They had gone to bed Wednesday night with a sense of relief not felt for many nights. The N. Y. World vividly pictured the world into which they awoke: "When the strike was actually called off, the whole Government publicity machinery, which was not under the direct control of the Prime Minister, and almost all the newspapers able to print at all, set up a howl of joy over labor's defeat. The result was immediate. The strike went on. It got worse, and it is worse now than when it started ten days ago."⁵ The Manchester Guardian editorially held that the terms of the Railroad Companies to their returning employees were "needlessly severe" and likely to "leave the

door open to victimization." The railroads, unlike the Underground and the bus companies, had to consider the fact that the end of the general strike was not the end of the miners' struggle, and that large amounts of business in freight would no longer be forthcoming until the miners started work again. In the meantime there was announced a fifty per cent cut in the railroad service because of the mine dispute. What this dispute meant for the railwaymen was seen in the rail Union figures for October 12, five months after the general strike had ended: 45,000 men had not had a job since May 1, and 200,000 were working only three days a week.

That it was the ranks who saved the day can not be doubted. Perhaps the most emphatic piece of evidence on this matter consists of the successive telegrams sent out by the headquarters of the National Union of Railwaymen to the various locals. On Wednesday afternoon, the day of the cancellation of the strike, the N. U. R. headquarters did not receive its word of the end until after three o'clock. Four minutes later the secretary of the N. U. R. sent out to the branches the following wire: "Trades Union Congress notify strike called off. Members must present themselves for duty at once. Keep me advised if necessary."⁶ A day later the same organization sent out this curt wire: "In view of difficulties concerning reinstatement Joint Executives call upon railwaymen continue strike until we receive satisfactory assurances."⁷ This was a wire from the three railroad unions, not merely the N. U. R. The Railway Review for May 21 implied that the union leaders were forced to declare a new strike by this action of the ranks: "The meeting was hurriedly arranged between the three railway Trade Union Executives at 2:00 p. m. on Thursday, when it was known everywhere that the men had refused to accept the conditions offered them when reporting for duty, no option was left but to call another strike and to offer negotiations to the Companies."⁸ The final settlement was better than that first offered, but was still such that, had the whole story of conditions been told the men while they were on strike, they would even then not have returned. The Locomotive Journal for July was full of comment like the following: "What was really a great victory by rank and file was translated into a defeat by sheer desperation" of the leaders.

The reprisals viewpoint on the part of employers cannot be greatly wondered at, no matter how poor its psychology, since the very Government of Britain contained two irreconcilable

groups. The fact that the more reactionary group lost out before the week ended was due to the refusal of the ranks to "surrender" and the equally determined refusal of the volunteer workers to be made the tools of a general strike upon trade union standards. "We will not take part in a pursuit" was the way one ex-soldier volunteer put it. As it was, the surrender was sufficiently serious for labor; as the weeks and months passed and still the miners remained out, the effect of their action piled up unemployment throughout the other unions, and made it extremely hard to recover financially from the high cost of striking.

The Cost of the Strike

The cost of the strike was immense and lasting. Ever-growing unemployment due to the miners' prolonged lock-out made union financial recovery virtually impossible. What the general strike cost the Government in lost revenue and actual outlays was a trifle when compared with the vast losses in national income. Above all, the legislative reprisals of 1927 lasted on the statute books until 1946.

Most of the unions involved admitted their error in contract-breaking and had to give a pledge that they would not instruct their members to strike, nationally, sectionally or locally without first exhausting the conciliation machinery available. In Glasgow four newspapers went non-union, and in Manchester the Manchester Guardian formed a "company" union. The London press pledged themselves to lock out all union men if any further attempt were made to break contracts by a strike without notice. The Government's own printing plant ceased to be union shop. The Engineers (machinists) who had been called out on the last day of the general strike had difficulty in getting reinstatement, partly because the coal mine situation decreased employment. The industry that paid the greatest penalty of all was that of the mines. The cold-blooded refusal of the Government to bring both parties to their senses by compelling solution on the basis of the Samuel Commission is a miserable story of slow, starvation surrender of the stubborn Miners' Federation. Slowly, district by district, the mine operators made settlement, with longer hours and with wages relatively or absolutely under the old wages for the seven-hour day. In one form or another, to unions, to business and to the public, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald estimated the combined costs of the coal dispute and the general strike, up to the beginning of October 1926, at no less than

half a billion pounds sterling.

Apart from the intense bitterness which the strike left in the minds of the British miners and in the feelings of the millions of workers who went out in sympathy strike for the miners, the general strike was the cause or excuse for the passage of some severe anti-union legislation. In the Trades Dispute and Trade Union Act of 1927 any strike or lock-out became illegal if it was "designed or calculated to coerce the Government either directly or by inflicting hardship upon the community." That the ban on lock-outs was an afterthought is seen in the careful limitation of retroactivity of the Act to May 1, 1926, the day after the mine operators' lock-out went into force but before May 4, the first day of the general strike. The same Act prevented the affiliation of civil service organizations with any other national labor organization and it imposed severe restrictions upon political activities of trade unions. After nearly twenty years of experience with the Act a victorious Labor Party, back in power, repealed the offending Act in 1946. The most emphatic but impartial comment on this Act is contained in a brief excerpt from a speech in the House of Lords by Lord Reading, at different times in a brilliant career Viceroy of India, Ambassador to the United States and Lord Chief Justice of Britain: "When I take the bill as a whole and look through it as I have done with great care, consider it clause by clause, I say without hesitation that it is a bill which in the language it uses is more vague, more indefinite, more lacking in precision in respect to the crimes which it indicates and the penalties which follow upon them, than any bill I have ever seen or any Act of Parliament I have had to construe as a law officer or a judge."⁹

Communist Influence

It is important at this point to emphasize the part played by the Communists. Earlier in this chapter mention is made of the T. U. C. appeal to Trades' Councils (City Centrals) in the towns and cities of Britain to coordinate and carry out the orders from headquarters of the T. U. C. Mention has also been made of the Minority Movement and its influence upon the leaders of the Miners' Federation through minority pressure in the miners' Lodges. It was the period when the Communist Party was still using every effort to build up the National Minority Movement with the aim of establishing rival organizations. When this effort failed the Party turned once again to infiltration of the

unions, mainly through the Trades Councils in the various cities. Before the strike call in 1926 the Minority Movement was the main Communist weapon, but once the strike call went out the Party members turned their attention to intensive cultivation of the Trades Councils. These Councils had been instructed by the T.U.C. General Council to do two main things: Coordinate and carry out instructions from union headquarters, and organize the workers for the preservation of order.

A whole book has been written by Emile Burns on Trades Councils in Action¹⁰ with a rather evident slant towards "the Party." It records that many Trades Councils, at a loss to know how best to proceed turned back to the precedent of the Councils of Action of 1920, when a British-Russian war was prevented by a threat of a general strike run by a Council of Action. Out of 131 Trades Councils heard from after the strike, Emile Burns lists 54 of such local "Councils of Action." The Trades Council, in mobilizing the local unions and labor representatives for the functions entrusted to them, recognized the struggle, says Burns, "as a class issue, and the functions necessary to secure victory for the working class were developed as fully as local circumstances would allow."¹¹ Again, in describing the frequent public meetings held by the various Trades Councils, he comments: "...frequent meetings play an important part in maintaining the morale of the workers and in developing the class consciousness on which success depends."¹² In discussing the issue of local bulletins during the strike Burns states: "The experience of members of the Communist Party in the production of factory papers proved of great use in many areas; Many of the arrests of Communists were in connection with paragraphs appearing in local sheets issued by them."¹³

The lack of pre-strike preparation by the T.U.C. thus left many gaps to be filled by alert local leaders, and there is no question that experts in organization, of Communist persuasion, made the most of the opportunity. The relative inadequacy of communications between the General Council and the rest of the nation's labor, enhanced by their constant effort to get negotiations renewed and the strike called off, left the field fairly wide open to the "class struggle" advocates. It was the growing fear that such leaders would shortly take over control of the general strike from the conservative labor men that hastened the "surrender" of the General Council. But, as has been pointed out above, the General Council might still have saved the day for

labor, had the Miners' Federation been willing to accept the Samuel Memorandum. That was impossible while A. J. Cook and the Minority Movement had such influence upon the decisions of the miners. A year too late the Miners' President, Herbert Smith, declared hotly that he saw no difference between the Minority Movement and the Communists, that they both received their orders from Moscow, and that he was not prepared to take his orders from Moscow.¹⁴

Humor and Tolerance

It would be incomplete to leave the British strike without some reference to the amazing degree of tolerance and humor shown by the striking ranks. A grim sense of humor in the midst of defeat motivated a North-of-England strike leader who told the writer that the first news of the strike's cancellation reached his strike committee by the ticker-tape, lifted hurriedly from the local conservative club and as hurriedly returned by a "loyal" member of the club's staff. At the height of the conflict the Plymouth Chief of Police and the local Strike Committee arranged a football match between their followers, and the Chief's wife kicked off. Oxford undergraduates, enrolled for the emergency, loaded and unloaded ships in Eastern harbors. In one instance the strikers, seeing how much more work per hour the students were performing than was normal, challenged the boys to a football match. This the Oxford men won. On their way back to town the two teams passed the usual plethora of "pubs" into which the strikers invited their winning opponents, in the hope that the dock-workers' ability to carry their liquor would be shown to the disadvantage of the undergraduates. With a wry chuckle the Oxford man ended his story: "We won that, too." Yet, with these undergraduates the strikers never went further than ridicule because they sensed that the youngsters were in no way trying to steal their permanent jobs. A railway engineer told the writer that a great deal of unintentional damage had been done by the O.M.S. amateurs on the delicate mechanisms of the steam locomotives, and added the tale of the Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates who ran "bumping races" with their buses, as if they were boats on the Thames. Perhaps the story that shows the underlying and almost unconscious loyalty of the railwaymen to their companies has to do with a vital railway junction near the Scottish border where a train driven by a "black-leg" engineer was finally allowed to go through by the rail pickets, because the train was one belonging to their own company!

Chapter VIII

JOB CONTROL IN SAN FRANCISCO 1934

San Francisco offers another type of economic general strike. Far more localized than the strike in Sweden in 1909, or the British one in 1926, this city-wide conflict had repercussions up and down the Pacific Coast. San Francisco had more violence and bloodshed immediately before the declaration of the general strike than did Sweden and Britain for the whole period of their respective walk-outs. Like Britain, San Francisco had a real overtone of political, if not revolutionary, intent. In both of these cases a Communist "Minority Movement" was present ("Rank-and-file Movement" in San Francisco), endeavoring to seize control of the unions but ultimately failing.

In all three instances there was present a common element of a powerful group in management and the press determined to crush the strike and put organized labor "in its place" for a generation. In all three cases, moreover, the long history of relationships between labor and management made its mark upon the character of the general strike that was the culminating act of the long struggle. In all three examples the public developed a citizens' organization that put at the service of government and business a group of citizen volunteers. In the case of San Francisco the actual form taken by the citizens' groups was more akin to the British Fascists than to the British O. M. S. In other words the citizens' groups in San Francisco ran to Vigilantes, and to "Red Raids," winked at or encouraged by most of the press and the governmental officials affected.

The original purpose of the San Francisco strike was greater job control by the workers on the docks and the ships — hiring halls run by and for the unions rather than by the employers. The then existing custom was something unpleasantly like the New York harbor "shape-up," so vividly exposed as a seed bed for revolt or racketeering. In this West Coast struggle a single personality stood out head and shoulders above the general run of labor leaders, one Alfred Bryant Renton Bridges, or "Harry" to his friends. How far this emergent leader was genuinely a member of the Communist Party affects the story little, for his actions tallied with the "Moscow line" so closely that it would take a microscope to find the difference.

The San Francisco general strike was the sixth example of that labor boomerang in America. (Previous general strikes in North America were in St. Louis, 1877, New Orleans in 1892, Philadelphia in 1910, and Seattle and Winnipeg in 1919.) All six were alleged by the press and the employers to be the work of radicals and foreigners. Yet in all but the St. Louis strike they were actually called under constitutional procedure by the existing craft unions, with the sanction of the local Central Labor Council affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

San Francisco's strike is of special interest to the American reader because it is the first general strike on this continent to be claimed by the Communist Party as its "own baby." This is not to say that earlier general strikes on the North American continent had no radical leaders behind them. That would be untrue, as Philadelphia in 1910 is evidence. It was not Communism behind the Philadelphia troubles, however, but rather widespread public hatred and contempt for the transit monopoly that offered to the public its transportation "service." In Philadelphia the police (unwisely, the business men believed) arrested Central Labor Union chief Murphy, and the national streetcar organizer, C.O. Pratt. In San Francisco, Bridges went unscathed, but with a sizeable bodyguard of longshoremen. In Philadelphia the public itself took shocking part in damage to the Rapid Transit property, whereas in San Francisco the damage done to property by citizens was against alleged "red" centers, press offices or meeting halls.

It is no easy matter to find the truth about the San Francisco strike. A citizen group, pressuring the Mayor to get martial law declared, asserted that the unions were organizing a police force of their own — a situation amounting to insurrection. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce organ, Nation's Business, supported this view to the effect that much advance planning had gone into the waterfront strike, which New York Communist Headquarters had engineered. On the other hand, a New York Post editorial took the view that the struggle had been countenanced by industrial leaders, in the hope that the public, experiencing the suffering caused by a strike, would lose its sympathy for labor. A Communist organ made light of the spontaneity of the strike and claimed that, but for the Party, with its class philosophy, no general strike would have occurred.¹ Was this, then, a carefully planned campaign of the communists to raise dissatisfaction on the Pacific Coast to revolutionary heat? Was it a

desperate effort of the longshoremen to get treatment more human and economic than the "shape-up" and a feeling by other unions that if the longshoremen lost this battle the next to go would be the "respectable" A. F. L. crafts unions and their skilled members? Or could it be true that the management groups in San Francisco were eager to revert, after generations, to the non-union basis of Los Angeles? It may be just possible that all three of these causes were back of the violent struggle for "job control" in San Francisco.

The Frisco Waterfront in History

Long before Bridges was born to plague the longshore employers of the Pacific Coast, struggle was the customary pattern on the waterfront. As far back as 1886, job control had been a flaming symbol of battle, for seamen and for dock workers. The luck alternated. At times the workers, at others the employers, controlled the hiring system. The year 1916 was a high point of emotion. The bombing of the "preparedness parade" on July 22 brought business and industrial opinion to a white heat. The outcome was a city ordinance banning all picketing. The mass pickets of 1934 were an ironic comment on the expression in 1916 that the city had "relieved itself for all time" from that instrument of violence. From 1919, a year of bitter strike and violence, to 1934, the longshore hiring control was lost to the union. The union itself, the A. F. L.'s International Longshoremen's Association, or I. L. A. for convenience, lost its hold over the waterfront workers to the so-called "Blue Book" Union, an alleged "company" union, but for four years affiliated with the A. F. L. San Francisco Labor Council. The Waterfront Employers' Union hired the men through their own hall or on the docks.

In 1922 Harry Bridges became a longshoreman in San Francisco. For nine months he managed to avoid joining the Blue Book union, but the need for a job ultimately conquered. Bridges' father was an Australian real estate man and Harry was born on that continent, not in Russia. His mother's family, Catholic, was energetic in the fight for Irish Independence. Bridges could have stayed in middle-class comfort in Australia but chose the sea, was shipwrecked twice, took part in a New Orleans dock strike, joined the Industrial Workers of the World (advocates in U. S. A. of the general strike as a revolutionary weapon), worked long hours as longshoreman and may have earned up to \$60 a

week, less the usual graft to get and hold a job.² In 1924 he with other militants tried to revive the I. L. A. Ill luck ended the effort, with an organizer who embezzled the funds. Why Bridges started again in 1933 to organize the I. L. A. for San Francisco is not clear, but he did, and that time the luck was with him. In September of that year the I. L. A. granted a charter to local 38-79, with Lee Holman as its president but Bridges as its real motivating force.

At the same time the Pacific Coast District I. L. A. was established by the International union in New York with William Lewis as its president and with almost complete autonomy. In December 1933 the local I. L. A. sought for a wage raise of 15¢ an hour (the current wage was 85¢ an hour, overtime at \$1.25), and a thirty-hour week. In March, 1934, the I. L. A. made additional demands on the Waterfront Employers: a closed shop and negotiation for the entire Pacific Coast by San Francisco Employers' Union. Both demands were rejected, though the Blue Book union had followed the closed shop practice. There was no authority, they alleged, for the San Francisco employers to handle negotiations for the other ports.

In March all Pacific Coast longshoremen were ordered to take a strike vote. At President Roosevelt's telegraphed request to postpone the strike until there had been time to appoint an impartial investigatory board, William Lewis consented to suspension of the strike order. The appointed three-man Board consisted of the chairmen of the three Regional Labor Boards of Seattle, Los Angeles and San Francisco. After four days of hearings the Board offered its recommendations to both sides. Then a strange thing happened. The Waterfront Employers' Union came up with counter-proposals, which the Board accepted in place of its own. Both Board and Employers proposed hiring halls jointly operated. The Board suggested a Board of Arbitration made up of labor and management representatives from each of the three coastal States, whose decisions on wages, hours and conditions should be binding on all ports of the Pacific Coast for at least one year. The Employers' answer to this was the same as to the union: each port's problems must be handled by that port alone. If the Waterfront Employers could not see a Coast-wide settlement, the I. L. A. would not hear of wage agreements on any other basis.³

Discussion of the proposal for joint operation of the hiring halls came to a deadlock over the question of registration of

bona fide longshoremen. Rapid infiltration of newcomers, unemployed, "undesirables," after the Bridges group had cut the initiation fee from \$25 to 50¢, was the cause of the impasse. Employers held that no longshoreman employed for the first time after July 1, 1933 should be registered. The I. L. A. local was said to have increased its membership from 1,400 to 4,000, most of which increase had come after July 1.

Thus the situation rapidly drifted to a waterfront strike. In the meantime the employers felt that frequent factual reports on the progress of negotiations should be made current property of the workers by the I. L. A. officers. The employers suggested a joint bulletin published by themselves and the union. At first the idea was welcomed by the union, but actual publication was postponed several times and at last abandoned. Lack of authentic news of what transpired in negotiations added power to those who preferred strife to settlement. It was during the period between March 23, when the strike was postponed, and May 1 that "radical agitation" on the waterfront, according to the employers, "began to assume alarming proportions." At this time the "workers were being told that their employers were selling them out." It was also during this period that Lee Holman, first president of Local 38-79 I. L. A., was tried during his absence with pneumonia by the "rank and file movement" and suspended for being "too conservative." Plainly the radicals were implying that their I. L. A. leaders also were "selling them out."⁴

The Waterfront Strike

On Wednesday, May 9, 1934 some fifteen thousand men left their longshore jobs all along the Pacific Coast. Trouble began with the strike. Police broke up a gathering of 500 pickets at the Luckenbach dock, where Negroes had refused to obey the strike call - which was not surprising, since the union had never admitted Negroes. The trouble in San Francisco of May-July might well be termed a "creeping" general strike. "Hot" goods brought spreading sympathy-protest strikes. Seattle teamsters voted not to deliver any materials handled by non-union longshoremen, unless the employers agreed to arbitrate differences. In Oakland Teamsters placed an embargo on freight handled by strike-breakers. Ships used to house and feed strike-breakers were liable to lose their union seamen and officers. In San Francisco the Teamsters with a mass meeting voice-vote

resolved not to transport merchandise to and from the docks. This was strictly a boycott of the docks, not yet a Teamsters' sympathy strike, for all the rest of the city was still a legitimate work-area for them.

The strike continued to spread. On May 14 the Boilermakers and the Machinists voted approval of a strike in maintenance and repair of ships manned by non-union crews or serviced by non-union stevedores. Between May 15 and 21 over 4,500 sailors, marine firemen, water tenders, marine cooks and stewards, and licensed officers walked out in sympathy with the striking longshoremen. Of some influence in this action was the strike of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union, a Communist organization affiliated with the Communist Trade Union League.⁵ The Employers had not hesitated to use strike-breakers to handle dock work. Even the conservative A. F. L. crafts unions felt their anger rise at this challenge and the Central Labor Council organ, the Clarion for May 18 thus expressed their indignation: "To parade strike-breakers through the streets on the way to the docks under police guard and to use public property and city employees in conveying these outcasts to their nefarious work was an invitation to violence. . . ." A month later the same Clarion described "The Real Issue in the Strike": "... Workers in other groups have been impelled to stand behind the marine and waterfront workers under the general belief that they represented the 'shock troops' in a general defense of the Trade Union position against the assault upon the union shop and for the installation of the 'open shop,' even in industries which had recognized union contracts for generations. . . ." It is evident that there has crept into the second statement not mere indignation against use of the police to protect strike-breakers, but a very real fear that the actions of the Waterfront Employers were merely a foretaste of what would happen to the rest of the union members if the longshoremen lost their strike.

Under pressure from Edward McGrady, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labor, the I. L. A. authorized its District Executive Board (Pacific Coast ports) to negotiate with Roosevelt's Fact Finding Board, already referred to, but with two important and rather frustrating qualifications: The Board must refer to the general membership of all Pacific Coast locals any settlement proposals and no longshoreman would be allowed to return to work until the shipowners agreed to the demands of the maritime unions then on sympathy strike with the

longshoremen. McGrady's comment was irritated: "There is an element among the longshoremen that lives on strike and does not want a settlement." These limitations on settlement powers should have warned both sides. Yet when national President Joseph Ryan, I. L. A., finally arrived in San Francisco, a mass meeting of barely a fourth of the membership of the Longshoremen's union vociferously approved hiring halls under exclusive union control, closed shop, and no return to work until all sympathy strikers' demands had been satisfied.

On May 28 came the alleged settlement: No closed, union, or preferential shop; no coast-wise collective bargaining; hiring halls under management control but with the constant presence of the I. L. A. representatives to see that no discrimination in the registration or hiring of any individual should take place. Bridges contended that such a settlement left the men worse off than they were before, and the sympathy strikers unprotected. The final vote of Local 38-79 was announced as 2,401 against 78, an overwhelming defeat of the "settlement." In Portland the settlement was turned down by unanimous voice-vote.

Ryan continued to negotiate with the employers, having no apparent sense of the power of the "rank-and-file movement" in the West Coast I. L. A. locals. In mid-June a new offering was made to the two sides, largely the personal work of Joseph Ryan of the I. L. A. and Thomas Plant, President of the Water-front Employers' Union. Before it was publicly announced an influential group had had a share in the proposals. (Beside the Mayor of the city, there were the President of the Industrial Association, representatives of the Citizens' Committee, the Fact Finding Board; Michael Casey, President of the S. F. Teamsters and Dave Beck, President of the Seattle Teamsters. Both of the latter pledged their word that the agreement would be accepted, that their members would quit the sympathy strike.) In brief the new settlement included: Joint and equal control of employment policies and of the hiring halls; all longshoremen employed prior to December 31, 1933 (as determined by the Employers' payrolls) were to be registered. A labor relations committee was to be established in each port, consisting of employers and union representatives, to decide wages, working rules, and to supervise hiring halls as well as to act in the guise of a Court of Appeal. Bridges pledged the return of his men if a two-thirds majority of the Pacific Coast membership voted in favor. The San Francisco hall for the mass meeting was packed,

in both senses of the word, and tumultuous. Hundreds of men who did not get into the hall were refused a vote. Ryan came late, found his agreement lost and was threatened with physical violence. Except for Los Angeles the settlement was lost all along the coast.⁶

General Strike Looms

By this time business and industry had a strong suspicion that left-wing forces, if not Communists, were doing their utmost to prolong the longshore-maritime strikes until a total explosion of a general strike would become inevitable. Bridges fed the flames of suspicion by his comment in late May: "The possibility of a general strike along the Pacific Coast is almost a certainty."⁷ By mid-June the I. L. A. sent letters advocating sympathetic strike action to all San Francisco unions. In the period between the two settlement proposals (May 28-June 16) the Woman's Auxiliary of the I. L. A. distributed handbills with a slogan "Forward to a General Strike!"

Seen from the labor angle the employers appeared to be planning the defeat of the longshore-maritime strike. After several meetings of thirty to sixty business men, it was decided on June 5 that full responsibility for the future conduct of the strike should be placed in the hands of the Industrial Association, but the decision was not made public until later. By mid-June 1,700 non-union workers were employed by the Waterfront Employers, loading cargo. Industrial Association officers have contended that the strike would have collapsed at that point but for the Teamsters' Union. The problem of unloading ships had been met but the business of getting freight to and from the docks had not been solved. The State-owned Belt Line Railway serviced the docks, industrial and rail terminals and connected with the main line railroads for freight shipment. When, therefore, the Teamsters voted to boycott the docks (May 13) the employers began to utilize the Belt Line more than normally, in order to move freight to and from the docks without forcing the Teamsters to withdraw their boycott.⁸

The radical members of the Teamsters became so opposed to handling "hot" freight that a resolution in a crowded mass meeting of teamsters put an end to any trucking of goods that had been handled by non-union workers (June 7). Speaking for the employers Thomas Plant estimated that hundreds and sometimes thousands of pickets had been at the waterfront. He

stated that they had used intimidation, threats and violence to drive teamsters from the waterfront.⁹ On June 12 the President of the Chamber of Commerce requested by letter that the Industrial Association "immediately assume the responsibility of determining a method of ending this intolerable condition." The Association accepted, even if the solution offered involved the forcible "opening of the port," with inevitable bloodshed. It appealed to President Roosevelt to intervene personally; to the State's Congressmen it explained in detail: "We believe President Roosevelt can open port of San Francisco within twenty-four hours by demanding that repudiated agreement approved by federal mediators be put into effect."¹⁰ This wire failed to indicate which of the two earliest proposed settlements it referred to. Since the wire was sent before June 16 it was evident it did not refer to that one.

The President of the Industrial Association had signed the "agreement" of June 16, as a guarantor that the employers would stand by their contract, just as Casey and Beck of the Teamsters had signed for the good behavior of the Longshoremen — with complete futility as events transpired. At the suggestion of the Industrial Association the press now began a series of warning editorials as to the peril of a possible general strike. The Industrial Association's plans, though withheld for a while from the general public, were divulged almost daily to the local Teamsters' officers. Warehouses were leased by the Association, trucks purchased, non-union drivers hired and non-union warehousemen engaged.¹¹ When the public was informed of the Association's readiness to "open the port" it asserted: "The port of San Francisco belongs to the people and it is going to be used by them. . . . Nobody is going to move us from this position."¹² In fact their plans for immediate action were suspended for a few days at the urgent plea of the Mayor, in the light of the new Longshoremen's Board, appointed by President Roosevelt and announced on June 26.¹³

The National Longshoremen's Board

Tremendous pressure upon Washington had been brought to bear by West Coast business and governmental agencies. The Board (Archbishop Hanna of San Francisco as chairman, Edward McGrady, and O.K. Cushing, San Francisco Attorney) had powers to investigate, to hold hearings and make findings of

fact; to act as voluntary arbitrator upon request; to make a report to the President through the Secretary of Labor, and to exercise other powers under N. I. R. A. and Public Resolution 44, 73rd Congress. This new Board held meetings weekdays and Sundays. It first and vainly tried to use conciliation. Then it moved on to suggest arbitration, hoping to get both parties' consent by July 5. Unfortunately the Industrial Association's deadline for opening the port was Tuesday afternoon, July 3. With this deadline there vanished the hope of avoiding a general strike. In the violence surrounding the opening of the port, the Board was almost forced to take a back seat. To this extent the extremists on both sides won the victory — for the time being.

"Opening the port" consisted of moving truckloads of goods from pier 38 to a warehouse leased by the Industrial Association a few blocks away. Non-union men loaded the trucks, non-union men drove them to the warehouse, and non-union men unloaded the trucks at their destination. No police rode on the trucks, nor did they act as escorts. Instead they cleared a portion of the waterfront of pickets and curious onlookers, partially blocking off the area with freight-cars "spotted" along the tracks and with police cars parked in close formation. Paul Eliel in his meticulously careful and well documented book told of the "opening." So did the press reporters. A sample of the reign of violence that developed was given in the N. Y. Times:

The port of San Francisco was opened to commerce today to the accompaniment of rioting in which one man was shot, an undetermined number injured. . . . Mounted and foot police swung their clubs and hurled tear-gas bombs, strikers hurled bricks and rocks, battered heads with clubs and railroad spikes and smashed windows. But not a missile reached any of the unarmed drivers manning the trucks used to smash the strike blockade. . . . Mounted and foot police relentlessly drove the pickets behind these freight-car barriers. The safety line remained intact but on its fringes pandemonium raged. ¹⁴

Wednesday, July 4, was a truce between both parties, but Thursday brought a savage renewal of the conflict, the more so because the Association's trucking fleet was enlarged, and this act angered the pickets. The rumor that the National Guard was to be moved into the city to protect the State's Belt Line Railroad

added to their irritation. Wrote Paul Eliel, Director of the Association's Industrial Relations Department:

... the numbers on the picket lines were enormously increased....

Pickets... were determined... definitely to put a stop to the movement of trucks from the docks....

In the afternoon... it was found that the gas barrage was not sufficient to prevent strikers from gathering together in knots at strategic points.... The police confessed their inability longer to control the crowd which was now estimated at 5,000 and for the first time they began to use fire-arms.¹⁵

The San Francisco Examiner's reporter painted an even more lurid picture: "Into stores where the pickets fled the police sent the bombs.... Tear gas clouds swept over the street car loop; cars drove through it. Two men fell wounded directly in front of the I. L. A. headquarters, untended for minutes, until an ambulance came for them. One of them died in hospital. Later another died. It was as close to actual war as anything but war itself could be."¹⁶ The parallel with war was not complete, however, for of the 28 shot none was a policeman. The final tally of the day's casualties was two dead and over a hundred wounded. Both dead men were pickets, one of them was a member of the Communist Party.¹⁷ As the day of violence ended the National Guard to the number of 1,500 men took over the waterfront and police and strikers vanished.

The death of the two pickets, the arrival of the National Guard and the use of overwhelming armed force to free the State-owned Belt Line appeared to have been more than the ordinary run of San Francisco union members could take without protest. The conservative (A. F. L.) leaders of labor stated in the Labor Clarion of July 13: "The Industrial Association deliberately precipitated the crisis by an insincere gesture to remove goods from the docks to a warehouse a few blocks away, with knowledge in advance that the move would be contested by strikers and sympathizers and that bloodshed was inevitable. It savored of premeditation and planned provocation of strife." Something of this feeling in the union ranks must have seeped over into the general public, especially after the dramatic funeral procession of the two dead pickets. Even professional and business men

said "I'm for the longshoremen." Communists, true to type, made much of government being on the side of "big capital."18

Plotting the General Strike

During these "alarums and excursions" the new Longshoremen's Board, with the Archbishop as its chairman, had to take a back seat. But it was by no means idle. Its main effort was to get both sides to submit the issues to the Board for arbitration, which would be binding on both parties. The Waterfront Employers agreed, provided that the closed shop was no part of the issue to be arbitrated. The I. L. A. through its Pacific Coast District President agreed to put arbitration to a referendum vote of all the membership. Simultaneously the District Secretary said that no referendum would be voted until assurance had been given that the ship owners would agree to arbitration between the seamen and the companies. He made it clear that the hiring hall issue could not go to arbitration. I. L. A. National President, Joseph Ryan, gave pungent comment: "One thing that prevents settlement is that the Communist Party led by Harry Bridges is in control of the San Francisco situation." The employers, he added, "had delegated their case to a small committee and this committee is dominated by the Industrial Association and the Manufacturers' Association of Los Angeles, an avowed open-shop organization."19

Fearing the oncoming general strike, the National Longshoremen's Board decided to start hearings on Monday, July 9. These hearings were most effective in spreading among the public a more complete picture of the issues. The press reports were full and probably strengthened the sympathy of the citizens for the strikers. Only later did the press campaign and actual experience of general strike inconveniences show the public more completely the price of that sympathy. Before increasing pressure the conservative A. F. L. leaders were fighting a retreating action. Friday was the usual evening for the weekly meeting of the A. F. L. Central Labor Council. For some weeks left-wing members had tried to move consideration of a general strike, but had been consistently ruled out of order. The Friday, July 6, meeting of the Central Labor Council substituted for the usual general strike motion a long resolution establishing a committee of seven to be the Strike Strategy Committee. Only eight votes were given against this motion and one of those was that of Harry Bridges. One hundred sixty-five approved.

This committee's duties were to investigate the charges that the "longshore and marine strikers were directed by people not in sympathy with the aims and objects of the A. F. L." and secondly to consult with responsible leaders of the striking unions as to new steps in a common program.

The Communists' avowed strategy was to use the existing Joint Maritime Strike Committee (five representatives from each union on strike) as an incipient General Strike Committee, by adding two elected members from every union that agreed to strike in sympathy. How the Communists felt when they were outmaneuvered by the Central Labor Council is clear from comment by Sam Darcy: "...it became evident that the Central Labor Council fakers knew they could not simply ignore the General Strike movement, so they decided to take over its leadership and strangle it. They elected a Strategy Committee of seven...."²⁰ The Strategy Committee was appointed at once by Edward Vandeleur, President of the Central Labor Council and of the Municipal Carmen's Union. He admittedly passed over unions already directly involved, as he wanted a "fresh viewpoint" brought to the issue.

Over the week-end the Teamsters held a "secret ballot" on the question "Do you wish to continue working after Wednesday under present conditions?" The vote was 1,220 to 271 (out of 2,500) in favor of a walk-out. There were no election booths and men discussed freely how they should vote. Michael Casey of the Teamsters was up against it. Younger men, trying to gain control, were indifferent to the problem of broken contracts.²¹

The National Longshoremen's Board met Monday, July 9, for hearings on the unions' grievances, adjourning for Monday afternoon when the silent and impressive funeral parade took place. The Board used much time trying to get an armistice on the imminent general strike. Bridges told the Board that the I. L. A. must have full control over the hiring halls and could not advise a return to work unless the maritime workers also had their demands satisfied. Eliel bears witness in his book that "Bridges made an extraordinary presentation before the Board speaking without notes and extemporaneously.... Employers were able for the first time to understand something of the hold which he had been able to establish over the strikers both in his own union and in the other maritime crafts."²² The Board had urged the Teamsters' officers to get their union strike postponed.

The night before the walk-out Casey did his utmost to persuade the men to follow the Board's request, quite in vain, as he was unanimously voted down. Cat-calls and boos greeted Casey. Cries for Bridges finally led to his dramatic entrance, flanked by several hundred longshoremen and marine workers.

The Teamsters' walk-out was strategic; that the startled public recognized. Seven-column headlines indicated that the press felt the same way. On both sides of the Bay teamsters to the number of 3,700 left their trucks, surrounded the strike area, and stopped all incoming trucks, making exception only for commodities which had been exempted - milk, bakery goods, laundry, beer and others. Wholesale Butchers and Slaughterhouse Workers added their numbers to those already out. Thirty other unions, having taken a strike vote, were awaiting orders from the Strike Strategy Committee. Deliveries of gas and fuel to retail concerns ceased. Thus the San Francisco general strike was a "creeping" one. It neither began nor ended with dramatic unanimity of time schedule.²³

Long before Monday, July 16, when the general strike was officially started, the peculiar characteristics of a general walk-out began to show themselves. A tight blockade of incoming trucks quickly affected the citizens, as the Teamsters' pickets closed the road from the South. Said the San Francisco Examiner:

San Francisco's food and gasoline problems... were taken to the Teamsters' Union, Local 85.... Emissaries of corporations and hospitals made their way through the crowd of striking truck drivers up the dingy stairs and waited their turn at the door behind which union officials sat.... Anyone not a representative in some way of a charitable institution or hospital was turned away with curt words before he reached that door, usually to the accompaniment of jeering laughter.... Union truck placards were granted without ado to the hospitals. Any hospital that applied.²⁴

What people thought about the unions, whether it was true or not, was important. One retail butcher declined to ask his delivery men to cross the commission district picket lines. Considering their long years of service to him, he was by no means going to risk their lives.²⁵

On Friday, July 13, the creeping paralysis intensified. Two thousand five hundred taxi-drivers were scheduled to walk out. Cleaners and dyers quit work for their own demands — unlike most of the sympathy strikers. Boilermakers in sixty shops left their jobs. That same afternoon a three-hour debate on calling the general strike took place between A. F. L. old-line leaders and the militants. The Strike Strategy Committee refused to take such responsibility as to give a general strike call. The buck was passed back to the 177 individual unions in the city. Each union was to select five delegates to the new strike committee, which was to meet for action on Saturday morning. This bit of internal strategy left Bridges and his militant colleagues shaking with rage as they left the Labor Temple meeting. Plainly, Bridges had failed to stampede the meeting. One hundred forty A. F. L. unions had voted to delay action, if only because the Board was trying to work out plans for arbitration on the maritime issues.²⁶

Once again the Communist, Sam Darcy, admitted to plans for control which were blocked by the old-type leaders.

It was our failure at this point, to prevent the fakers from taking over the leadership of the strike, that cost us the eventual loss of the strike. The fakers dropped the discredited Strategy Committee of Seven, which was to meet the very next morning at ten o'clock. Thus on Saturday noon we were faced with a general strike committee of about 800 members, the majority of whom were paid officials, appointed by other paid officials.... We were paying for our neglect of the A. F. L. work for ten years previous....²⁷

This Saturday meeting showed delegates of 115 unions present. Amid hysterical confusion, radicals booing conservatives and cheering their own, the vote was taken: 63 for the general strike, 3 against, with 49 still unauthorized. The radicals won, but the conservatives gained some points: Bridges' candidacy for vice-chairman of the meeting was lost and Vandeleur was nominated. The general strike was postponed until Monday, whereas the extremists had demanded an immediate walk-out. The temporary executive committee to act as a central body for carrying on the strike was to be nominated by the chairman, Vandeleur, not Bridges.²⁸

Thus, after days, if not weeks, of endeavor to find a way out, and to avoid a general strike, the struggle was lost, and the steady advance of the tide was unchecked. Even before Monday, July 16, the general strike was reality, with one very important exception: the Press made a vital contract with the Typographical union on Sunday night in which the union was pledged not to strike and the employers not to lock-out for the year's duration of the agreement. A previous wage cut of 10 per cent was restored in this new contract. The critical part the Press played will be described in the next chapter.²⁹

Chapter IX

SAN FRANCISCO: THE STRIKE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The "Creeping" General Strike

Like the slow advance of the tide the general strike engulfed San Francisco and the "Bay," reaching far back into the agricultural counties and threatening the great coastal ports of Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland. May ninth saw the longshoremen out all along the West Coast. By June a variegated assortment of maritime unions, from licensed officers to able-bodied seamen, had joined the longshoremen. Maritime workers bring the ship to port and longshoremen unload it, but it is the responsibility of the teamsters to move the goods once they have been unloaded.

At first the Teamsters Union refused to touch goods on the docks where their shipment had been handled by non-union (strike-breaking) seamen or longshoremen. The I. L. A. then proceeded to organize the warehousemen. Then the teamsters were indeed confused. Should they touch goods that had been warehoused by non-union strike-breakers? What about crossing the picket line of another A. F. L. union? The official "opening of the port" by the Industrial Association of San Francisco, on the third and fifth of July, with the active aid of the city's police force, armed with gas and guns, was the last straw to the teamsters. The death of two pickets was followed two days later by the vast mass meeting of the teamsters, who overwhelmingly voted down their senior officers and set Thursday, July 12, as the deadline. If the President's Board had not achieved a settlement by that date all trucking was to cease throughout the city.

Over the week-end of July 15 all sorts of unions were voting to join the longshoremen, the maritime workers and the teamsters. Taxi-cabs were off the streets, as were the Market Street and Cable cars. Gas stations were rapidly drying up without replenishment and panicky housewives were threatening to clear out the retail food stores, while millions of dollars worth of food and fruit lay useless in the city's warehouses, or began to spoil in the fields for lack of trucking or of adequate police escort. On Sunday, July 15, the General Strike Executive Committee, made up of twenty-five labor leaders, predominantly

conservative, approved the exemption from strike orders of milk-wagon drivers, bakery- and ice-wagon drivers. "Special Permits" were issued to any hospital or charitable institution that asked for them. In this the new Executive Committee followed the earlier example of the teamsters.

On Sunday night, a few hours before the general strike, the publishers had concluded another year's contract with the Typographical Union. The price paid to obtain this "key" service was an agreement by the publishers to reinstate a 10 per cent higher wage. When, therefore, the Executive Strike Committee, after some argument, exempted the distribution of newspapers from the strike order, the weapon of the press was assured in the main to the forces fighting the strike. The argument for distribution had been the peril of false rumors. As it happened, rumors in plenty were circulated by the press and a tremendous campaign was waged in the editorial columns to prove that the general strike was nothing less than a revolution. It must be admitted that certain items received good news publicity; among these were the National Board's hearings and the description of the strike victims' mass funeral, discussed below.

The Strike Begins to Ebb

San Francisco's walk-out was never an all-out, simultaneous general strike, for the power and light, telephone and telegraph workers took no part, nor were the national railroad ferries struck, but only certain local services. All day Monday, July 16, the municipal street cars were off the streets. These employees were on civil service rating and to have voted for a strike would have been breach of contract with corresponding loss of job tenure. The chairman of the Strike Committee, Edward Vandeleur, was also president of the Municipal Railway Union, and at the close of Monday he and the Committee agreed that the city employees would be ordered back to work, even though the rest of the street car services remained on strike. Thus it happened that the strike tide began to ebb at the end of the very first day of the general strike, even before the full tide of the East Bay area had been reached, for Oakland, Berkeley and their suburbs did not join the general walk-out until Tuesday morning, July 17.

To complete the picture of the steady ebb of the general strike: Tuesday saw a resolution approved by the Committee urging all West Coast Governors and Mayors to appeal to

President Roosevelt, who in turn was to press for arbitration that would be binding on all parties concerned.¹ The Strike Committee had exempted nineteen restaurants. This number proved far too few to meet public demand. Wednesday brought a fierce discussion in Committee on the issue of releasing all union restaurants and butcher shops from the strike order. The proposal was carried and all embargoes on fuel and gasoline for the general public were also lifted. Finally, on Thursday afternoon, July 19, the Strike Committee by a narrow vote of 191 to 174 formally called off the strike. Taxi-cabs were immediately on the streets but the radical members of the Teamsters' Union were hard to "sell" on the return to work. A secret ballot was taken all Friday with the outcome of 1,138 in favor and only 238 against cancellation of the strike. So, despite the noisy minority, teamsters were back at work Saturday, with their own squad cars circulating to prevent any possible interference with their members by longshore or maritime pickets.

In Oakland the general strike was not called off until Friday, July 20, and the teamsters in that area did not return to work until the week-end was over. The East Bay laundry workers, cleaners and dyers all remained out, seeking demands of their own. In similar fashion the Market Street Railway employees did not get their settlement until the end of July, and they, too, had their own demands. The longshoremen's vote for arbitration was four times that given against it, and the seamen's vote was eight and a half to one in favor. Their return did not come until July 31. The conditions under which the longshoremen returned to work were the same as those under which they had been working 83 days earlier, when the strike started, with the exception that union observers and government supervisors were to be stationed in the existing hiring halls pending the permanent decision of the Arbitration Board.² (For summary of the settlement see Addendum on page 473.)

A "creeping" general strike may sometimes terrorize the general public by its apparently irresistible flow. It is more likely to build up a growing sense of irritation, expressed in energetic citizens' committees or vigilante mobs. Before long it brings armed governmental intervention. For the remainder of this chapter the conflicting groups involved in the strike and its settlement will be analyzed and their part in the strike appraised. Among these groups will be included the Federal Government, the Industrial Association as representing the employers, the

Press, the Police and National Guard and above all the ranks of labor, both right and left.

The Role of the Federal Government

One of the underlying sources of irritation between employers and employees on the West Coast from May 1933 was the interpretation and importance of Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act. This Act's primary purpose was to bring more business and industrial stability into a world wracked with depression and unemployment. To this end cut-throat competitive prices and sub-standard wages were regulated or banned by the industrial codes which the law sought to establish. Ceilings over hours and floors beneath wages, required by the codes, were two great aids to organized and unorganized labor. There is evidence that these codes "contributed to a general rise in real wages... not lost when the United States Supreme Court invalidated the law."³ To the longshoremen and maritime workers in San Francisco Section 7a was of even greater importance. It laid down the law that "employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively, through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from interference, restraint or coercion of employers of labor, or their agents, in the designation of such representatives...."⁴

Seamen and longshoremen did not have the advantage of belonging to industries that were under the regulation of an N.R.A. code. They were, however, ripe for action under Section 7a. They coveted "recognition" of their unions, whereas the employers were emphatic that recognition invariably led to closed shop, which they opposed on principle, pleading that it was illegal under 7a. Comparatively early in 1934 the Federal Government began to take an active part in the struggle between the I. L. A. and the Waterfront Employers' Association, as the preceding chapter has shown, through the Fact Finding Board and the National Longshoremen's Board. The action of the Industrial Association in "opening the port" before the new Board could really get into its stride, has been described. Some understanding of the Federal Government's thinking about the West Coast crisis is needful.

The Secretary of Labor appears to have thought that during the last three days before the general strike started the only party refusing to accept the Board's arbitration services was that of the shipowners. It is true that the shipowners did not

accept arbitration until the general strike was over, as will be seen below. Yet it could not truthfully be said that either the longshoremen or the maritime unions had agreed without vital qualifications. Only the Waterfront Employers' Union had given its unequivocal but last-minute pledge to accept arbitration. More correctly the Federal authorities "feared both sides in this industrial warfare were determined upon a fight to the finish." Russell Porter wrote in the N. Y. Times:

In well informed Federal circles the main issue is seen as having transcended the original dispute between the I. L. A. and the Waterfront Employers' Union into a bitter struggle between virtually all organized labor here and the powerful Industrial Association. . . . Although these Federal officials regard some of the most active strike leaders as extremely radical, they do not consider them Communists, but on the contrary, regard their struggle as strictly a labor dispute.⁵

That this viewpoint did not alter after the general strike was cancelled is evident from Russell Porter's report four days later:

Senator Wagner, General Johnson and the members of the National Longshoremen's Board are all understood to believe that the striking longshoremen and maritime workers have certain legitimate grievances that should be corrected, and that certain powerful shipping and waterfront interests have deliberately refused to remedy these evils and have persistently blocked a settlement because of a concerted desire to crush labor unionism, and to keep down wage rates and payroll.⁶

Albert E. Boynton, managing director of the Industrial Association, has insisted that this sentiment was misguided. Only one or two minor companies, he contended, were responsible for the abuse of employer-control over hiring halls.⁷ Be that as it may General Johnson and the three members of the National Longshoremen's Board worked far into the night of Wednesday, July 18, emphasizing the fact that neither side could expect Federal support until labor called off the general strike and the die-hard employers saw reason on their martial law demand.⁸

How unwelcome was the "invasion" of Federal officials such

as General Johnson and Edward McGrady can be seen in the hot reception given the former by the Publishers, described below, and by the comment of Mayor Dore of Seattle, when McGrady had tried to get the "opening of the port" at Seattle postponed, that McGrady need not try to run the city's affairs, and the city would not paralyze its business and industry to accommodate him.⁹ Except that it was alleged to be accidental, the hottest welcome of all was received by Senator Wagner, after an air trip to Portland to aid in preventing a general strike in that city. As the senator and a group of labor leaders were examining the scene of non-union work and consequent clashes between strikers and police, his party was fired upon by guards at Municipal Terminal 4.¹⁰

It is not easy to think oneself back into the atmosphere of San Francisco of 1934. In the first place the Byrnes Act banning the transportation of strike-breakers across State lines did not become Federal law until 1936. The Industrial Association and other employers' organizations in the city had no qualms about advertising for strike-breakers, and the dock workers knew that only too well. Again, Section 7a of N. I. R. A. had no real enforcement teeth, unlike the same type of section in the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, upheld by the Supreme Court two years later. As there was no such act on the statute books in 1934 there was no legal concept of "unfair labor practices" of employers, and as a result "everything went." It must not be forgotten, either, that the Fair Labor Standards Act was not enacted until 1938, and there was no Federal "floor" under a laborer's wage, nor a ceiling over the maximum hours that he might be called upon to work in a week, unless he were under a N. I. R. A. code or had a union contract. The West Coast longshoremen had no such security.

Finally there was no C. I. O. in existence, though rumbles of its coming might have been heard by those with keen ears. There was, therefore, no group to which the industrial unions could turn for national affiliation except the A. F. L. The resultant pressure of the younger generation of labor leaders to gain control of the A. F. L. naturally disturbed the old and conservative heads of craft unions. The West Coast business men were about as conservative as the A. F. L. leaders. All that was needed to make the whole situation highly explosive was the infiltration of a small handful of left-wingers, Communist in allegiance and ready to hew to the Party line, rather than to fight

for the economic and political needs of the American worker. With the above factors in mind, it is, perhaps, easier to understand the moves and counter-moves of the Federal Government and the San Francisco labor movement that preceded, accompanied and followed the general strike in that city.

The Press Plays a Star Role

Among the most powerful factors in molding the changes in public reaction to the strike were unquestionably the newspapers of the Bay Area. In the description that follows, one paper is not involved – the Scripps-Howard News. As early as July 1 a correspondent of the N. Y. Times informed his readers that the Industrial Association was initiating a campaign to prove that the general strike was communistic, and that this campaign was being aided by the American Legion.¹¹

An article in the Editor and Publisher that records how the newspapers helped to break the strike, tells of an emergency meeting of the publishers of five Bay area papers together with Mr. Neylan, the chief counsel of the Hearst Press:

The situation had developed far beyond a dispute between shipowners and striking maritime unions. The National Longshoremen's Board lacked authority. Mediation efforts had repeatedly failed and strikers refused arbitration except on their own terms. It was evident there could be no arbitration of the original dispute until the 'revolution' had been quelled.

On Sunday July 15 the Examiner and Chronicle published front page editorials stating that radicals had seized control by intimidation and that the general strike was a revolution against constituted authority.

Under Mr. Neylan's leadership plans were made to crush the revolt. . . . Newspaper editors built up the strength and influence of the conservative leaders and aided in splitting the conservative membership away from the radicals by pointing out the danger of being plunged headlong into a course which would cause organized labor to lose all the gains of many years.¹²

How powerful was this publishers' group can be seen from the way in which they handled General Hugh Johnson, N. R. A. Administrator. When the General arrived in San Francisco to

speak at the University of California in Berkeley, he was drawn into the longshore-maritime dispute. Before this Publishers' Council he proposed that the Longshoremen's Union should be given complete control of the hiring halls, before arbitration would be undertaken.

It was evident to the publishers that he might undo all the Publishers' Council was trying to accomplish.... He was informed that this would be a compromise with revolution. Mr. Neylan and the Publishers' Council sat up with General Johnson until three o'clock Tuesday morning giving him a picture of the crisis.

The General quieted down when specifically informed that his tactics had been such that the people of California might decide to get along without him... might even have to ask him to leave San Francisco.¹³

When General Johnson finally did leave San Francisco he remarked that this was the first time he had ever "been up against a newspaper oligarchy."

On the day after the general strike ended the publishers met at the home of Mr. Neylan, along with representatives of the Industrial Association, the Waterfront Employers' Union and several steamship companies. This all-day conference on what was to be done with the still resistant maritime unions showed "considerable divergence of opinion," but ultimately came to an agreement that in addition to arbitration for the longshoremen, and collective bargaining for the seamen, the shipowners would also agree to arbitrate wages, hours and working conditions.¹⁴ Burke's story of the publishers enables us to venture a guess as to some of the reasons for this "divergence of opinion." "In order that neither shipowners nor other employers might use the strike collapse as an opportunity, it was emphasized in newspaper editorials and in Mayor Rossi's proclamation that advantage must not be taken to crush the rights of organized labor, as conservative labor leaders and membership had rallied to save the city from disaster."¹⁵ (*Italics added.*) One must remember that up to the eleventh hour the publishers themselves were none too sure of obtaining a new contract with the Typographical Union. Bergoff, the professional provider of strike-breakers, is reported as saying that "several San Francisco publishers asked for non-union printers."¹⁶ That the publishers

had convinced themselves appears from Burke's conclusion. They thought that the situation might develop into a revolution which would sweep the country.

A typical sample of the editorial campaign appeared in a Hearst paper, the Examiner, under the title, "This Strike Cannot Win." The editorial characterized the strike as a mere side issue arising from capture by a small group of Communists of all union labor in the area for sinister ends. Neither San Francisco nor any other community, it said, would submit to defeat at the hands of Communists by means of a general strike.¹⁷ This view, that the so-called general strike was in reality local or State-wide revolution, and that the vast thousands of sound union men had somehow been captured by the Communists, was widespread among the legal and governmental authorities. Acting-Governor Frank Merriam, for example, made a great deal of the revolutionary aspect of the strike, saying that a new element, Communist agitators, had entered the California labor situation; not having the good of labor at heart, they had wrested control from labor, and were in full power.¹⁸ How completely the notion that the Communists had captured the A. F. L. unions possessed most of the city's leaders can be seen from the amazing volte face made by General Johnson at Berkeley when he referred to the situation in San Francisco as "civil war and a menace to government." If he was correctly reported that comment was a hard one to reconcile with previous press comments of George West on General Johnson.¹⁹

Who Were the Vigilantes?

One does not have to conclude that all the unconstitutional and emotional anti-Red actions that occurred in San Francisco during and after the general strike were kept at a white heat by the propaganda of the city's press. It is enough to deduce that much of the mob hysteria would not have occurred had the press disseminated only the calmer viewpoint of men like Archbishop Hanna. It is hard to pin down precisely what group instigated the series of raids that broke out in the urban and rural territory of the San Francisco area. Over the week-end before the general strike officially started, a mob of a hundred, said to be hoodlums and Communists, attacked three Chinese restaurants, partly wrecked the furnishings, and then went on to the burlesque at the Moulin Rouge theater. There the police made arrests and broke up the gang.²⁰ In contrast to this mob the police

consistently failed to uncover the Vigilantes in the anti-Red raids that followed. Tuesday, the second day of the general strike, saw a raid luridly described by the San Francisco Examiner. Some twenty men, the account said, descended on a Communist headquarters with baseball bats and other homely weapons. They shattered the windows with rocks, fought off the Reds and put them to flight, with full approval of the mob outside. They smashed furniture and pictures and tore up literature, reducing the interior to a shambles. They got away before police sirens were too close, leaving the mob to enter and finish the demolition. 21

A somewhat different slant is given to the Vigilantes' story by the N. Y. Times:

The first indication of the concerted drive against radicals came from Charles Wheeler, Vice-President of the McCormick Steamship Line, who said in a talk to the Rotary Club today (Tuesday July 17) that raids would soon start. He intimated that government consent had been obtained for the raids.

The San Francisco Chronicle asserts that the 'vigilantes' who raided the radical headquarters were organized by conservative labor leaders. Thirty-five squads of 'vigilantes' said to have been composed chiefly of striking teamsters, according to this version, were sent out in automobiles in order to make the raids.

The identity of the 'vigilantes' has not been officially revealed. At first general opinion was that they were connected with the Committee of Five Hundred organized by prominent citizens at the behest of Mayor Angelo Rossi. 22

This triple explanation — business men, conservative teamsters, and the Citizens' Committee of Five Hundred — offers the reader wide choice, but still leaves open the question of why the raids took place without ever bringing police and vigilantes together. The real "mystery" about the vigilantes is why they were never identified officially. The police had usually "mopped up" what alleged Reds were left after the vigilantes had departed. Tuesday July 17, however, the police themselves initiated a raid in Howard Street: "Fully two hundred men were corralled there and herded into police wagons. Everything in the place was demolished. Most of the prisoners were charged with vagrancy. .

the authorities plan to check their antecedents carefully with a view to deporting aliens."23

When the strike was called off, Thursday, July 19, "Communists by the score were fleeing from the city" according to the Southern and the Western Pacific roads. The same day a fire "mysteriously" destroyed the Triangle Press where the Communist Western Worker was printed. Friday saw the homes of thirty suspect Communist-sympathizers the object of rock-throwing, each rock wrapped with a warning message to get out of town, or else. The police admitted that several of the victims were not even radicals. In contrast to all these raids was the attitude of Municipal Judge Lazarus who said in Court: "I am disgusted to think that this good old town should have acted like a pack of mad wolves. I don't know who is responsible, but it should be traced back to its source."24

Industry, The Police and The National Guard

Other groups that played a star lead in the general strike picture were the Industrial Association, the Police and the National Guard. The Nation's reporter found in the attitude of the Police a curious contradiction. Many of the regular waterfront police were once longshoremen themselves. Other men were moved to the waterfront, as the crisis approached, some 750 of them, led by Police Chief Quinn: "At one hour some of these policemen would fraternize with the strikers, buy tickets to their benefit dances, share with them sandwiches from the ships. An hour later these same policemen would ride strikers down, club them viciously, shoot straight into milling crowds..."25 In the last chapter it was made clear that conflict with the Police started with the first day of the longshore strike. During May the strikers attacked an employers' hiring hall, making it untenable for a reporting center of strike-breakers. As the month passed the violence grew. An attack on Pier 19 brought out at least one thousand "pickets" who tried to reach a ship being unloaded by non-union men.

It was not, however, until the Industrial Association proceeded to "open the port," July 3 and 5, with full protection from the police, that gas bombs, riot guns and revolvers were freely used against the strikers. Mayor Rossi and the National Longshoremen's Board were fully aware that the use of force to "open the port" would inevitably bring forth force from the strikers, making settlement the harder. More than once the

Association postponed the date but, after all, as a super-Chamber of Commerce acting for the business men of the whole area, it recognized that each day of the strike cost the area a million dollars. When President Roosevelt appointed the National Longshoremen's Board "The Industrial Association already had... reached an understanding with Acting Governor Merriam that the National Guard would be available if necessary.... Its leaders were prepared to risk the danger of a general strike."26 On the afternoon of the day in which two strikers died of police shots the Guard moved in. As they took over from the police Bridges ordered his men to cease fighting, since they could not "stand up to police machine guns and National Guard bayonets."27

Once the Guard took over, with bayonets and machine guns all along the waterfront, pickets were conspicuous by their absence, and cargo trucks roared in a steady stream in and out of the piers. This collapse of the waterfront strike had an immediate effect on the rest of organized labor, as the teamsters' vote to strike indicated. The mass funeral of the two riot victims showed something of the public feeling, in spite of the fact that the funeral was organized with intentional drama and thus followed closely a world-wide Communist pattern. Willis O'Brien of the Examiner described:

A river of men, flowing up Market Street... a myriad bright California flowers... the solemn strain of dirges and hymns... uncountable thousands of spectators lining the streets with uncovered heads.... There was never a policeman in sight along the whole line of march.... 'Comrades' who attempted to distribute inflammatory literature were seized by the I. L. A. 'police department' and hurried out of sight as summarily as ever a policeman could have done it.

Traffic, too, was controlled by the I. L. A. man.... Police discreetly kept out of sight by agreement with the strikers to let them do their own policing. There was not the slightest disturbance.28

Seemingly satisfied with the results of "opening the port," industrial and business interests were determined to follow up their gains by demanding martial law throughout the city. This demand for martial law was first made of Mayor Rossi in a stormy session at the City Hall, by the leaders of the Committee of Five Hundred. The Mayor was in his office with three

newspaper men waiting to hear him make the formal request to the Governor at the Capitol. Then a wire from the National Longshoremen's Board asking the Governor not to declare martial law spiked the plan:

Mayor Rossi turned to his secretary and dictated the following statement: 'Despite the fact that vigorous pressure has been brought upon me to ask the Governor to declare martial law I feel that in view of the developments in the past 48 hours that the situation does not demand such action'.... The failure of the Industrial Association of San Francisco to get the troops called out today is the first real set-back that the industrialists have had since the strike began.... The final body blow was to be the troops. Then labor would be taking orders from the military and on every street car and on every truck armed National Guardsmen would have ridden. There was no mistake about the part the Industrial Association was playing in the demand for troops. It was completely and entirely an Industrial Association move.²⁹

Rumor was rife that the Guardsmen were ready to take over other sections of the city; that the Guards' air force was ready for an immediate flight and that a gradual infiltration into the city was taking place with Guardsmen already four blocks inland from the docks.³⁰ How the Guards cooperated with the Police in their raids is indicated by the Examiner. With the protection of truckloads of armed National Guardsmen, a Police Captain and sixteen officers dropped down upon the Marine Workers' Industrial Union, known as a Communist body. With no struggle at all, 90 men were arrested as vagrants.³¹ The same type of raid then took place at the I. L. A. soup kitchen, again "as soldiers squinted down the barrels of their guns." The raids seem to have moved from definitely Communist centers to those affiliated with the A. F. L. General Johnson's comment at Los Angeles is sufficient summary concerning martial law: "The pressure on the Government from a small group of wealthy men, asking for martial law, was terrific.... Martial law wipes out government, and substitutes the dictatorship of a single man. In this case the single man would have been, beyond question, the tool of extremists among the employers...."³²

Labor - Left and Right

The analysis of the parts played in the general strike by outstanding social groups would be Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark if the vast mass of organized and unorganized labor were omitted. What, in fact, were the workers in basic beliefs and reactions: right-wing or left-wing? One of the most deadly accusations against the general strike was the constantly repeated allegation that the strikers would take good care of their own families but would see to it that the essentials of life did not reach the rest of the community. This assertion was found in the speeches of the top leaders of the State and Nation. The Governor, in his radio address to the citizens of California on the first day of the general strike, declared: "An attempt has been made - with partial success - to prevent the transportation of food and other necessities of life into the area where the general strike exists."³³ Even General Hugh Johnson, with a supposedly different concept of the San Francisco struggle than that of the Governor, could say to an audience in Berkeley that if the supply of milk to children were threatened that would be "bloody revolution."

The N. Y. Times in an editorial "Holding up a City" warned the strikers that they would lose every shred of public support if they proceeded "in their determination to keep food and supplies from hospitals and children."³⁴ This canard about the strikers' "determination" to starve the people may have arisen from two sources: (1) In the vote for the general strike, on Saturday July 14, "absolutely no exception or provision was made for feeding the city's thousands,"³⁵ and (2) it was an unquestioned fact that there was a picket line on the Southern entrance to San Francisco which appeared to be manned by Teamsters' Union members. There were further isolated occurrences where truckers from out of the city were held up and their trucks run off the road.³⁶

There can be little question that when the National Guard made picketing no longer possible on the waterfront, but permitted large amounts of goods to be trucked away, the more radical of the longshoremen and teamsters moved their picket lines to the outskirts of the city. It is no less true that just as soon as the conservative labor leaders found themselves in control of the newly created General Strike Committee, on Saturday July 14, the very first thing that the temporary executive committee considered was the problem of food supply for the sick,

the aged, children and the general public. It was from this authority that the orders went out to exempt from the strike milk, bread and ice wagon drivers, and the delivery of meat to the hospitals. Furthermore, one of the functions of the "Labor Police" (established by the Strike Committee) was to see that those deliveries were not interfered with by strike pickets.³⁷

By the first evening of the general strike the Strike Committee was considering the exemption of gasoline trucks and the wisdom of putting butchers back to work. In similar fashion, in Oakland, the unions of the East Bay planned for no restraint on milk, bakery and ice deliveries. Valid reason for transportation would entitle a citizen to buy gasoline.³⁸ The nineteen restaurants "accredited" by the Strike Committee were found to be far too few and thus they became the ready cause for indignation not only to business men but also to wage earners and white-collar workers who failed to get food on the first day of the strike. The Strike Committee at once increased the number to fifty-one, but the damage had been done. How easy, in fact, was the Strike Committee on this "permit" granting can be seen from the following paragraph: "On the first day of the general strike the picket lines which had been thrown across the highways leading into the city from adjacent farm areas let food trucks convoyed by policemen pass unmolested. . . . The food trucks allowed to pass the picket lines received 'permits' from the strike committee, which announced that more permits would be issued so that 'no one' in San Francisco shall go hungry."³⁹

This aspect of the general strike illustrated the intensity of belief by the business class that the workers of the West Coast were so hag-ridden with the "class war" concept of society that neither reason nor humanity could be expected of them in a general strike. When the ruthless logic of a truly revolutionary strike was tempered to the needs of women, children, the sick and the aged, by innumerable permits from the strike committee, this very humanity was seized upon as a gesture of usurping the authority of the city, the State or the national Government. The establishment of picked and responsible union men to act as labor police, to keep order among the pickets on the street, and to ensure the unhindered passage of the trucks with permits, was yet another proof of the "revolutionary" character of the struggle. Moreover, when successive relaxations of the logically strict general strike occurred in the interest of

the public and to hold its sympathy, labor was promptly assumed to be "weakening," the strike to be failing and the conservative labor leaders to be regaining their power over the ranks.

There is another point that the issue of "permits" illustrated: the degree to which the labor movement was unprepared for the general strike as shown by its uncertainty and confusion of planning. It was surely one piece of evidence that the majority of the labor forces did not consider the strike to be revolutionary.

That there was great confusion, even on the part of the extreme radicals became evident. Just before the strike became general Bridges declared:

If the people can't get food, the maritime workers and long-shoremen will lose the strike. 40

Mr. Bridges said that he intended to recommend the immediate establishment of food distribution depots in every section of the city, with sub-committees of strikers to prevent profiteering, to regulate distribution of vegetables and fruit, and to prevent hardship. 41

How much this scheme of Mr. Bridges would have confined the distribution of food supplies to strike families only was not indicated. Press reports had Bridges protesting against the poor management of the strike: "The general strike was broken by the return of the carmen and the lifting of restrictions upon food and gasoline" (italics added). 42 If Mr. Bridges intended to preserve food supplies for his own group, then his attitude was mirrored in the comments of two teamsters as reported in the Examiner and widely broadcast to the indignant public. One said that food could be provided for their own people simply by placing a union placard on any of their trucks. The other agreed, adding that they needn't care about the rich. 43 The public knew little of the General Strike Committee, on which Bridges sat as one of the minority, who ran the strike and whose first thought was food supplies "so that no one shall go hungry." This then was the dilemma: If the city eats, the strike fails. If the city starves, the strikers starve too and the strike is lost.

To assess the development, guidance and ending of the general strike with some degree of inclusiveness, the story must be told as it appears also in the printed pages of Communist journals and papers, always remembering that the mere

assertion of control over a union or a major strike decision by the Communists does not necessarily prove their claim to be true. To them prestige is the goal and truth but a tool, to be discarded if imagination serves better. What must be checked here is the degree to which the strike leaders' policies and deeds jibed with, or contradicted the assertions of the Communist writers.

Sam Darcy, a well-known West Coast Communist, writing in the Communist for October, 1934, scouts the idea that the general strike was spontaneous:

Of course the general strike movement was in no sense a spontaneous movement. It took long and careful preparation. At first the militants sent small committees, chiefly from the Longshoremen's local, to the A. F. L. locals, appealing for support by a vote for a general strike. First we tackled only those locals that we knew were most militant. As we began to tackle the larger locals and those in the key industries which would be critical for the outcome of the general strike, we sent, not small delegations, but delegations ranging from 50 to as much as 400. 44

Let me state here that there would have been no maritime or general strike except for the work of our Party... the very fact that it was a sympathy strike gives it its political character, a declaration of class consciousness on the part of the San Francisco workers and, secondly, an act of united class action. 45

For several years, claims Mr. Darcy, there had been a growing militancy in California "led by Communist Party members or close sympathizers." The employers' counter-offensive made the "main issue the hiring hall control." The first objective of the general strike was to defeat that counter-offensive; the second "to force some economic concessions from the capitalists." A third goal was "to compel the government to withdraw all the forces it had put into the field on the side of the shipowners...." It is significant that Darcy includes not only the police and the National Guard but even the National Longshoremen's Board!

For a long time before July 16 the Communist "fraction" in the Central Labor Council of the A. F. L. was moving resolutions to have the Council consider the general strike. Because

of their numerical weakness in that body they were continually being "ruled out of order."⁴⁶ The Labor Clarion told how the Council used a counter-irritant:

At the meeting of the Council last Friday night attended by more than 250 delegates and with a large Communist clique in attendance as visitors, resolutions submitted by the executive committee were adopted by a vote (92 to 22) that should leave no doubt in the minds of those who have attempted to foist revolutionary political doctrines and policies upon the central body, that it stands squarely upon A. F. L. principles and is opposed to Communism and all its works.

The resolution repudiated "all Communist organizations, especially the Marine Industrial Union" and strongly advised the I. L. A. to "withdraw all connections with the Communist element on the waterfront."⁴⁷

Having thus failed to make a dent in the armor of the Central Labor Council, the Communists' strategy was to make the Joint Maritime Strike Committee of fifty members into a general strike committee by the following tactic: Whenever an A. F. L. local voted for the general strike, it would be asked to elect two members to the Joint Marine Strike Committee.⁴⁸ The fatal July 5 arrived with the death of two pickets at the hands of the police and the arrival of the National Guard. Then, said Darcy, the Central Labor Council decided to take over the general strike movement.⁴⁹ On Saturday July 7 this Strike Strategy Committee met the Communist-controlled Joint Maritime Strike Committee, primarily to get the facts in readiness for their appearance before the National Longshoremen's Board on Monday morning. Darcy asserts that "our fraction" had instructions to do everything possible to bring into being a rank-and-file strike committee that would proceed at once to call a general strike. "Instead, our own leading comrades...decided not to take final action on that day until the Strategy Committee had the chance to do something...they did not understand that the Strategy Committee had been appointed to kill the strike, and not to organize it."⁵⁰

On Friday June 13, when sixty union locals had voted to join the longshore and marine strikers, the Strategy Committee of the Council refused to accept the onus of calling a general strike,

quoting the A. F. L. constitution as forbidding such action. They turned over the burden to the component unions of the A. F. L. and instructed them to appoint five delegates each for a full strike committee with power to cast a decisive vote the very next day, Saturday. At this point Harry Bridges and other left-wing leaders of the maritime workers left the Labor Temple in a rage.⁵¹ Bridges had failed to stampede the Council, and Darcy comments: "The failure to carry out determinedly the line of the Party to build a militant General Strike Committee led by the maritime workers, lost us the leadership during the period of transition from a maritime strike to the general strike."⁵²

The progress of the conflict between the radical and conservative labor elements after the general strike had started seems to support Darcy's view that the Communists lost the control of the strike on Saturday July 14. All day long, Tuesday, the second day of the general strike, debate raged in the Strike Committee over a resolution moved by the conservatives to have all parties concerned accept arbitration by the President's National Longshoremen's Board. In fact, labor justified its general strike on the plea that it was to force arbitration on the unwilling shipowners. After seven hours of wrangling the resolution was passed exactly as originally introduced, despite continual efforts by the radicals to amend the motion so that union hiring halls would be a condition precedent to any arbitration. After the meeting Bridges complained that the meeting had been "packed," the vote of 207 to 180 was close, the chairman refused a roll-call, declared the resolution passed, and adjourned the meeting; the whole thing was railroaded.⁵³

All through Wednesday intense effort was made to persuade the Governor to place the whole city under martial law. The Junior Chamber of Commerce obtained over ten thousand signatures in less than three hours on a petition to the Governor to that effect. This became known to the Strike Committee and had no little to do with the resolution passed on Thursday, calling off the strike. Of that day, Wednesday, Darcy said that when it appeared that "the fakers" might not be able to call off the strike, a "barrage of terror" was levelled at the Party in hope of destroying the strike leadership. But the Party, for all its weaknesses, had reached such a stage of organization that police and vigilantes failed to find "the centers of direction."⁵⁴

The final step in the defeat of the left-wing group came on

Thursday July 19, shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon.⁵⁵ At that time the conservative leaders seem to have felt that the time was ripe for a vote on a resolution to call off the strike, which had been before the Strike Committee for hours. The motion to call off the strike passed by a very small majority (191-174), but the speed with which the striking taxicab drivers and others were on the street again seems to indicate that the ranks had come to view the general strike as a burden. "The great majority of the rank-and-file of the strikers were...delighted. Most of them had let their leaders vote them into the general strike.... They did not want to overthrow the government or to establish Soviets and were as shocked as anybody else when it was revealed that some of the agitators who had been working with them did have some such aim."⁵⁶

The teamsters were a tough nut to crack and their leaders, seeing that the "militants" still had a noisy following, arranged for a secret ballot all day Friday. The ballot gave 1,138 to 283 in favor of immediate return to work. That meant work was to be resumed, even on the docks, and that was a body-blow for the Bridges group.⁵⁷

On the last week-end of July, the longshoremen, having failed to get the green light from the maritime workers, were advised by Bridges himself to set a date for return to work, and Monday July 30 was that date. In the meantime the longshoremen had voted for return four to one, in San Francisco three to one. On the last day in July the seamen, the only maritime union not heard from, voted 4,305 to 509 to submit their case to arbitration.⁵⁸

Stubborn to the end, the radicals under Bridges' leadership had bitterly protested against the referendum on arbitration but the conservatives in the San Francisco local overwhelmed them, at a meeting on July 21. All up and down the coast the longshoremen had been willing to accept arbitration and only San Francisco had held up the issue.⁵⁹

Playing into Communists' Hands

Now why were the rank and file able to be taken out from under the experienced hands of the regular A. F. L. leaders? Perhaps, in part, for the reason given to William Hines by a "high police official" in San Francisco. He admitted that the Communists were active: "But their activity began when the rank and file of the workers became convinced that their leaders

were too much hand-in-glove with the industrial interests of the city. "60 Something of this "hand-in-glove" habit is seen in the relations between the Teamsters' head officers and the Industrial Association when the latter organization was preparing to "open the port," by force if necessary. Wrote Eliel: "Almost daily, . . . either in personal conversations in the offices of the Association, or by telephone, these men were advised of the successive steps which the Association had undertaken. . . . In fact, these officers of the Teamsters' Union were more thoroughly in touch with what the Industrial Association proposed to do than was anyone except the high officials of the city and the officers and staff of the Association itself."61

The most striking example of this attitude of the top leaders of the A. F. L. both locally and nationally is exemplified in the story of the negotiations for settlement of the longshore dispute by Joseph Ryan, International President of the I. L. A. Two "agreements" had already been made and tentatively accepted by the District I. L. A. officials, or rejected by the ranks; those of April 3 and May 28. In neither of them had Ryan been a negotiator, but he must have been informed of the recalcitrance of the ranks under Bridges and their refusal to accept anything short of union-controlled hiring halls. Yet Ryan went to San Francisco, entered into "executive conference" with Thomas Plant, President of the Waterfront Employers' Union, at the latter's home, and came out of that negotiation with a settlement of which he was so sure, that not only did he assert there was no need to put it to referendum, but that the ranks would not have to be consulted on it. When the draft of the settlement was complete a gathering of important business and union leaders met in the Mayor's office and exchanged a signed agreement the like of which probably has not been seen in San Francisco since.

This "agreement" of June 16 included the joint management of the hiring halls by union and employers, and Ryan felt he had really achieved a great deal in obtaining that concession. Not only did Michael Casey of the Teamsters sign a guarantee that the I. L. A. membership would observe this agreement, but Dave Beck, head of the Seattle Teamsters, also signed the same statement. Ryan, of course, signed for the I. L. A., and J. E. Finnegan for the District I. L. A., but William J. Lewis, President of the Pacific Coast District I. L. A., was the only leader who refused to sign until the agreement had been submitted to the membership.62

In all that galaxy of top A. F. L. leaders, supposedly aware of the feelings on the part of their ranks, only one was wise enough to know that no signed pledge of that sort was worth the paper it was written on, until accepted by the ranks.

A second reason for the stampeding of the ranks by the left-wing was undoubtedly the importation of the State troops, with a threat of widespread martial law. It was this aspect of the case that roused innumerable thousands of "regular" trade unionists, whether in San Francisco, in Portland or Seattle.

The question naturally arises, 'what makes the action of the unions so unanimous?' The answer is the National Guard. Had there been no troops called into the San Francisco strike of the longshoremen, the labor battle would, in the opinion of nearly everyone of judgment, never have gotten beyond the waterfront. San Francisco labor men are a stable lot of workers. Most of them own their homes.... They resented the troops and to show their resentment they voted a general strike.⁶³

In Portland the story was much the same: "Governor Eugene Meier ordered a regiment of National Guard to mobilize for riot duty.... This action was immediately followed by the threat of a general strike should the militia move to the waterfront."⁶⁴

A third reason for the "capture" of the regular union membership by the "left-wing" is undoubtedly the long tradition of waterfront struggle and frequent violence on both sides. Long before the Communists could mouth "All power to the Soviets," the American-born left-wing of labor had formed the I. W. W. (Industrial Workers of the World), and had advocated sabotage, One Big Union and the General Strike. None of these ideas were Kremlin patents; they were taken over by Russia. Soon after the Australian, Harry Bridges, first landed in America he took part in a dock strike in New Orleans and joined the I. W. W. there as an organizer. At that time the I. W. W. was in very bad books with most of organized labor, especially with the A. F. L. and with most American citizens. So from his earliest days in U. S. A. Bridges knew and sided with the minority, left-wing labor movement.

The long experience of dock workers in San Francisco that without membership in the "Blue Book" union it was virtually impossible for even a "star" worker to get a job made them

ready at any time to follow a bold leader who could "deliver the goods." In this way the I. L. A. local in San Francisco was a "natural" for attracting all the left-wingers in the longshore industry. This lure became all the stronger as the Bridges group reduced the membership fee from \$25 to 50¢ and thus packed the local with newcomers, many of whom had never worked on the San Francisco docks before.⁶⁵

A final reason for the temporary slide of the multitudinous ranks to the side of the "lefts" and the general strike, was the action of the Industrial Association, which gave some color to the Communist allegations that the struggle was a class-drive to destroy union labor in a strongly unionized city. The Association was well known in labor circles to be "open shop" in its goal. It was determined to "open the port," with the coincidence of police efforts to open the ports of Seattle and Portland simultaneously. Despite the request of the President's Longshoremen's Board and the Mayor not to force the issue, the issue was forced. Extreme violence followed. The National Guard was instantly ordered in, and finally the general strike "crept" in, despite all efforts to avoid, or to postpone it, by the old-line labor leaders and the Longshoremen's Board.

Unwilling to admit that its efforts to "open the port" played into the hands of the left-wing labor group, the Industrial Association announced at the end of the general strike: "The attempt to transfer a labor dispute into a revolution has failed.... San Francisco citizens had an unsuccessful demonstration of the purposes and methods of revolutionary communism. They have repudiated it overwhelmingly and expect guarantees from organized labor against its recurrence. This community must now be made safe against a repetition of these disastrous days."⁶⁶

Subsequent history of San Francisco waterfront relations up to 1954 seems to show that such "guarantees" were not and could not be obtained by an organization with open shop aims such as the Industrial Association. Nor was President Forbes by any means summing up the whole story of the general strike in his statement, quoted above. The N. Y. Times correspondent put the case more objectively:

Another most important factor in producing a settlement was the rapid growth of moderate opinion on both sides of the controversy during the general strike. When all classes in the city began to realize the meaning of the general strike as a threat to organized society, moderate business men

began to exert the greater influence over the 'diehards' who wanted to break unionism, just as the conservative labor leaders began to regain ascendancy over the radicals who wanted to break the employers. 67

General Strike - Whose Defeat?

The general strike is a boomerang. It hurts labor more than it harms the employing class. But those among management who bring down upon themselves and the public the catastrophe of a general strike cannot lightly pass on the responsibility to left-wing agitators. Fire does not burn where there is no dry timber. The Waterfront Employers' Union may quite truthfully point to their series of concessions to labor, but many were too little and one was too late. Had their agreement to arbitrate reached the Longshoremen's Board sooner than it did the odds are favorable that the key union of the Teamsters would never have walked out. At least that is the considered opinion of the A. F. L. Labor Clarion. 68

Again, had the publishers been advised to soft-pedal "revolution" by such an influential organization as the Industrial Association, it is quite likely that the shipowners would have been willing to agree to arbitration. 69 They did agree, the day after the general strike was called off. Why was it needful to wait until the general strike had been inflicted on the city? Had they agreed to accept arbitration, then organized labor in San Francisco would clearly have been behind the eight ball, unless they, too, had unequivocally accepted arbitration by the National Longshoremen's Board. But then there would have been no general strike.

The Longshore and general strikes cost San Francisco business nearly one hundred million dollars. Who, then, gained from the general strike? Whose was the defeat when it ended? William Green's rather pontifical statement met common press approval when he said: "The sound, sober judgment of the organized workers of San Francisco finally asserted itself. They made a grave mistake when they engaged in a sympathetic strike, but they acted wisely when they ordered it officially terminated. . . ." 70 Green spoke as if the organized workers and their conservative leaders had completely free choice in calling and ending the general strike. "When you can't beat 'em, jine 'em" is an old saw. "Jine 'em" the conservative leaders did, with hope and determination that they might immediately soften the rigors of the general strike, and ultimately end it before

organized labor was penalized by citizens and employers.

The conservative old-line labor leaders who had been forced into the general strike because younger and more radical leaders had swayed a strongly articulate minority of the rank and file into reckless demand for direct action, were delighted that they had been able to bring the general strike to a quick end without turning public opinion definitely against the organized labor movement.⁷¹

Over a week later the N. Y. Times correspondent could comment: "It is remarkable that unionism emerged from the debacle of the general strike apparently unweakened, and that the waterfront strikers have been assured of concessions that can only be regarded as a decided victory according to all trade union standards."⁷²

If the general strike was called to obtain the ultimate in job security, the union controlled hiring halls, it was a failure, for the Arbitration decision, when it came, gave joint control of the hiring hall by employers and I. L. A., with the dispatcher of the longshoremen selected by the I. L. A., but with methods and policies determined by a Labor Relations Committee consisting of equal numbers of I. L. A. nominees and of representatives designated by the employers. In these basic aspects the Arbitration award did not differ from the offer signed by Joseph Ryan on June 16 but so rudely rejected by Bridges' cohorts.

Again, suppose that the general strike was called to obtain union recognition and collective bargaining after the manner of Section 7a, then the June 16 agreement contained specific acceptance of both.⁷³ If, however, the aim of the general strike was to achieve union or closed shop, that was plainly not in the award, as the following sentence will show: "Each longshoreman registered at the hall who is not a member of the International Longshoremen's Association shall pay monthly to the Committee toward the support of the hall a sum equal to the pro rata share of the expense borne by each member of the International Longshoremen's Association."⁷⁴ A subsequent paragraph made it quite clear that there was to be no discrimination, "regardless of union or non-union membership."⁷⁵ If, on the other hand, it were an issue of wage rates — the I. L. A. demanded a minimum basic rate of \$1.00, overtime \$1.50 — the award gave 95¢ and \$1.40 respectively. The existing rates were 85¢ and \$1.25. On this basis neither side won.

Let us suppose, however, that none of these was the underlying reason for calling the general strike but that:

San Francisco labor is fighting for more than the right of stevedores to organize and to abolish the company-controlled hiring halls. It is fighting for more than the preservation of unionism in San Francisco. It is fighting for the right of labor to provide the same checks and balances in our economic life that we have in our political life. It is fighting to make NRA an industrial democracy rather than an industrial autocracy.

It is because labor was given so much less than Industry, (in NRA) it is because high hopes were dashed on vague phrases, that this strike has occurred.⁷⁶

If this is a correct diagnosis, much of what was said in the section on the "Role of the Federal Government" seems to support it. If the Labor Relations Act of 1935, with teeth in it that were not found in N. I. R. A., is in any sense a guarantee of "checks and balances in our economic life," then the general strike in San Francisco was not a dead loss to labor.

For the A. F. L. Central Labor Council, for the general run of the mill, A. F. L. old-line, conservative labor leaders, the general strike was a last desperate weapon to force the acceptance, on both sides, of arbitration by the President's National Longshoremen's Board. It took the general strike to get the shipowners to accept. It took the apparent defeat of the general strike to get the conservative leaders and ranks of the I. L. A. (in reality the great majority) to force a referendum on the radical minority. And the coast-wide referendum soon showed that four longshoremen wanted arbitration to every one that resisted it.

If it was really a defeat of any section in the city it was the failure of the die-hards on both sides. Bridges and his Communist supporters were set back on their heels, for a while. The open-shop employers had not weakened unionism in San Francisco. The publishers, despite their seeming belief in their own propaganda, did not take the stolid masses of citizens off their feet, no matter what a noisy minority of vigilantes might do. And martial law did not extend to the city as a whole, unlike many other U. S. cities at this period of general unrest and rapid industrial organization.

Chapter X

AMERICAN GENERAL STRIKES, 1935-52: I

Terre Haute's "Labor Holiday"

In the early morning of Monday, July 22, 1935, "Mobs began to gather in the down-town streets. Along Wabash Avenue the merchants came to work as usual, since none had really expected trouble, but when they opened the doors bands of men streamed in, carrying sticks and clubs. 'Shut this damn place up,' their spokesman announced, 'or we'll shut it for you.' Soon the down-town section was closed, and cars full of men were patrolling the outlying sections to make sure that gas stations and neighborhood groceries stayed shut too. . . .

"It was one of the most complete tie-ups in the history of American labor."¹ Thus, with no apparent warning to Terre Haute or outside cities, that mid-Western city of 63,000 became the object of the week's principal labor news. For long years Terre Haute had had a militant labor history. Eugene Debs had made it his home, and from that center he first organized the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, and then, when he found them far too self-centered and craft-conscious, the industrial American Railway Union, which took in all sorts and types of railroad workers. Labor in Terre Haute still remembered with affection the man who cared nothing for his own fortune, but much for his industrial colleagues.

Originally a coal town, the city was one of the first to get organized by the United Mine Workers, which once had some 12,000 members in the county.² The New Deal, with its National Industrial Recovery Act, found Terre Haute only 20 per cent organized, but by July 22, 1935, 90 per cent of its workers were on union membership rolls.³ The precise bone of contention in 1935 was the Columbian Enameling and Stamping Company, where for over a year the employees had been trying to put into effect the collective bargaining provision contained in N.I.R.A.'s Section 7a. After a strike in the previous summer the company agreed with the Regional Labor Board not to discriminate against the strikers, but to arbitrate points in dispute. Then they recanted, refused to discuss the issue of the closed shop, and proceeded to discriminate.⁴ In March, 1935, the employees struck once again. Picketing took place from that date

until June 16. 5 Then the company hired armed guards – stones had been heaved through plant windows – and the strikers attacked the plant, wrecked the office equipment, did \$15,000 damage, and chased the armed guards into the plant, whence they were rescued by the police the next day. 6

The armed guards were sent out of town, and Governor McNutt offered his services to mediate the strike. There was no reply from the company until July. The strikers were hot under the collar because, thirty-three years before, the company had come to Terre Haute, settled well within the city boundaries, yet obtained from the city fathers a decree that the site of their plant was outside the city and therefore tax-free. Employees of the same company, living and working within city limits, paid taxes. 7

In July organized labor in the city staged mass meetings and sympathy parades. The company imported fifty-eight strikebreakers with armed guards, escorted by the city police – paid for, said the strikers, not by the Columbian Company, but by their workers and the rest of the citizen taxpayers. L. G. Brown, business agent of Federal Labor Union 19694 A. F. L., appealed to the Central Labor Union for a general sympathetic strike. The Council refused, and Brown approached union heads individually, winning most of them over. An unauthorized rump meeting of forty-eight unions assembled and voted that if the strikebreakers were not out of Vigo County by Monday, July 22, the forty-eight unions would call a "labor holiday." 8

The strikebreakers did not leave. At one A. M. on July 22, the day scheduled for the reopening of Columbia's plant, the general strike ("labor holiday") began.

It was planned for 24 hours duration, but because of the mob spirit it provoked, it got out of control. Business in the city was at a standstill for almost 48 hours, and the tie-up might have lasted longer but for the invoking of martial law. 9

Nearly every business establishment in town was closed up. Street cars, buses and taxicabs were off the streets. Employees of filling stations struck. Department stores, groceries, butcher shops, restaurants, saloons and movies closed. There were no deliveries of milk or ice. Crowds threatened the Terre Haute Star and Tribune, both under the same management, forcing them to

suspend publication. Union miners in Vigo county stopped work.¹⁰

By noon on Monday, July 22, some 22,000 union members were on the streets or were absent from their jobs. Bands of workers roamed the city urging men to quit work. They did not talk of a general strike, but of a "labor holiday," as did their forebears in England a century earlier.¹¹ Only the workers at the water, gas, electric power, and a few other isolated plants stayed on their jobs. The city was tied up as tight as a drum.

The Governor declared martial law, and 1,100 National Guardsmen poured into town, "to preserve order, not to take sides," said their commanding officer.¹² Be that as it may, the three thousand massed strikers and sympathizers outside the Columbian plant surged forward to prevent entry of the National Guardsmen. The police, on duty for forty-eight consecutive hours, fired several hundred rounds of tear gas into the crowd; the Guardsmen used the butts of their rifles.¹³ Then more than six hundred Guardsmen took over the plant and set up machine guns to protect the entrance. In the city itself the Guardsmen rode the streetcars, the buses and the taxicabs in an effort to open the city's paralyzed transportation facilities.

The federal Conciliators conferred the day through with the spokesmen of the forty-eight unions and the management of the Columbian Company. At the end of forty-eight hours the officers of the Federal Union in the Columbian plant signed the following announcement:

The undersigned members of Federal Labor Union #19694 believe that the Department of Labor is now able to handle the situation and all the men and women who struck in sympathy are asked to return to work.

L. G. Brown, President
N. G. Haver, Secretary
Otis Scott¹⁴

T. N. Taylor, district organizer of the A. F. L. and William Green's special representative, then called off the strike, but had his radio announcement censored by the military because he criticized the manner in which the situation had been handled by the Mayor.¹⁵ With Taylor's announcement most of the stores which had not opened with the second day under protection

of the National Guard started normal business again. Some refused to renew contracts with their employees, contending that the latter had broken them by joining in the labor holiday.¹⁶ Terre Haute paid high for the Columbian plant. The strike cost \$200,000 for each day.¹⁷

Underlying Factors of the "Holiday"

Terre Haute in 1935 was not unlike San Francisco in 1934. They were both deeply influenced by the N.I.R.A., Section 7a, and by the comparatively friendly attitude of the Federal administration to organized labor. As with San Francisco, so with Terre Haute, companies such as the Columbian were hostile to any closed shop idea. As in San Francisco, the importation of strikebreakers under escort of the city's police was a red rag to organized labor. In Terre Haute, however, the injustice of the situation seemed to be greater because the company using the city's police was a tax-free concern, whereas in the Western city the great shipping companies were not so exempted. Whereas in San Francisco the National Guard confined itself to a narrow band of streets around the docks, in Terre Haute the whole city was patrolled under strict martial law, and many arrests were made by the troops.

An underlying factor that had long irritated the Indiana city was the slow loss of business as the coal mines became worked out. To gain new business, something different was essential from a reputation of being a "bad" (union) town for new enterprise. But leadership was not forthcoming from its natural source in the Chamber of Commerce. A minority of Terre Haute's business men ran their affairs as rugged individualists, and the main tool of these men was the city's Chamber of Commerce. Thus, said Fortune, this institution came "to lack confidence of the town, of its own members and of organized labor."¹⁸

The press failed egregiously in its duty to the city by giving no warning of what was ahead. Two newspapers, the morning Star and the evening Tribune, "published in the same building, edited on the same floor, and owned by the same family... their editorial policies are often indistinguishable. Neither takes sides in local issues..."¹⁹ Fortune added to the features suggested above another of "machine politics," and considered that "trouble was inevitable" with a combination of such irritants as militant labor, lack of business leadership, and a "hermetically sealed press."

Louis Stark, one of America's most competent reporters of labor affairs over the years, considered the Terre Haute outburst in a "typically American community" a warning exposure of "latent labor grievances" which were smoldering in many other American cities because of "long delays in the adjustment of disputes." He felt that these delays could be traced back to the "circumlocution machinery" created by the National Recovery Act, and by those who administered it. He summed up the Terre Haute strike by concluding that it "was in preparation for more than a year." By this preparation he clearly implied the workers' unhappy experience of delay and default on the part of the Columbian Company, together with the disillusion shared by so many workers over the unfulfilled promises of Section 7a of the N. I. R. A. 20

Three years after the general strike Terre Haute, under the inspiration of a Junior Chamber of Commerce, began to see the possibility of more practical labor-management relationships. Many a dispute that in previous days would have come to a long and bitter strike was settled amicably around a table by personnel of the Junior Chamber and union representatives of Terre Haute. This was accomplished because again and again a frictional grievance was tackled well before it broke into open flame.²¹ To this degree, then, the labor holiday was worth its costs.

Pekin - Zero Hour, Zero Weather

What this town needs is a vigilante committee of about 100 tough citizens.²²

You can't even buy a drink stronger than coffee: the door to every bar in town is shut and locked. You can't even go to a movie: the theatres are closed. So are the beauty shops and beauty salons, so also are restaurants and cafes. Taxicab drivers toast their skins by the fire while people who would like to be their patrons slither along on icy pavements in zero weather. Truck drivers are bringing in no produce; they aren't working either. Neither are the bakers. A hundred leather workers reported for work and stood by their benches - idle. . . . everything in Pekin that supplies commodities or services is closed. The people who do the work aren't working and they've very firmly asked every merchant to help them

'tie up the town.' 23

... union delegates had informed all merchants that if their shops were not locked up by the strike's deadline [3:00 P.M.], their windows would be smashed. Not a shop in Pekin was open after 3 p.m. 24

The workers of Pekin, Illinois, were better off than their fellows in San Francisco in one respect: the National Labor Relations Act was on the nation's statute books. But they were only a little better off, because the Supreme Court had not yet issued its vital decisions recognizing as constitutional the powers which the Board was struggling to exercise. The trouble in both cities that in each case led ultimately to a general strike was aggravated by the absence of effective law that would enforce the right to organize, to choose representatives, and to conduct collective bargaining for the achievement of a labor-management contract.

The National Labor Relations Board has always had a heavy backlog of cases, a situation which has meant long and tiresome delays to those workers who sought to get action by decision of the board rather than by means of a strike and a picket line. The trouble in Pekin dated back for nearly two years. Pekin was a comparatively small town of 17,000 population, with a handful of important concerns, including Fleischmann's yeast, Quaker Oats, Corn Products Refining Company, and the bone of contention, the American Distilling Company.

In 1934 the workers in the distillery tried to get pay for "call-in-time" (when workers are sent for by the company, but not used after they arrive), at one quarter of the usual rate, and time and one-half for overtime. The superintendent refused to bargain or to see Federal authorities. In May of that year the pickets turned back the sheriff's deputies, who were armed with axe handles and gas bombs, "in one of the most militant strikes that ever escaped national notice." They won a majority of their demands. 25 The distillery started a company union, and within two months the A. F. L. Distillery Workers walked out in protest against alleged discrimination. The company still favored its own union. In the July, 1953, seasonal layoff there was a dismissal of a group of union men, with no explanation. Their places were taken by new workers who joined the company union or no union at all.

January, 1936, saw another group dismissal on various

charges of inefficiency which the company made no effort to support before the Trial Examiner of the National Labor Relations Board. The company, indeed, claimed that the Wagner Act was unconstitutional.²⁶ Among the dismissed workers was the president of the Distillery Workers' local. The hearings before the board were long, and the delay thereafter still longer. The union members finally decided to settle the issue themselves, and called a strike for January 19, 1936. The next day the plant shut down, and some 700 workers were jobless.²⁷

"Labor Holiday" Renders City Helpless

Monday, January 19, 1936, saw a picket line at the distillery. It is alleged that by 8:30 that morning Chief Donahue had dispersed the pickets by blackjacks and tear gas bombs.²⁸ The line re-formed on January 22 in a blizzard with the thermometer at twenty below. The police chief with his "fog boys" again dispersed the pickets, with nausea gas this time, and burned the picketers' tent. The company announced that it would reopen the plant for full operation on Monday, February 3. When the day arrived, city buses full of company union members were met by the pickets. A brick hit a bus, and the police threw their gas grenades. That night there was a mass meeting of all local unions.²⁹ A general strike was called that evening by the Pekin Trades and Labor Assembly as a protest against the methods of the police and the discrimination against union members shown by the Distillery Company. Thirty-one crafts and trade groups joined the walkout.

Earl Herbig, president of the Assembly, declared: "Unless our demands are met by tomorrow morning another 1,500 workers employed by the Fleischmann Yeast and the Corn Products Refining Company will go off their jobs."³⁰ On Tuesday morning, February 4, the streets were deserted before a biting wind of thirteen degrees below zero. At Peoria State and Federal negotiators were trying to unravel the tangled skein. Among them was Martin Durkin, Director of the State Labor Department, later to become Federal Secretary of Labor under President Eisenhower. Strikers reiterated that the settlement of the general strike depended upon the resignation of Chief Donahue, while pickets continued to walk past the distillery plant. Others took their positions on the highways, warning any drivers not to attempt delivery.³¹ Five companies of National Guardsmen waited in Peoria, seven miles away.

For two days Pekin was virtually under trade union dictatorship. "Authorities of the city bowed as strike chiefs completed a siege of all business activities by enforcing a general shutdown of all stores and shops save the prescription counters of pharmacies. What few enterprises continued were being operated under 'permits' issued by the Trades and Labor Assembly.... Among the 'permitted' necessities were delivery of milk and restricted delivery of fuel."³² In the last hour before the strike deadline, 3:00 P. M., there was a mad rush upon the grocery and meat stores for food supplies. From hundreds of Pekin homes and from the countryside families poured in to buy food, meat, tobacco and clothing. At three o'clock doors were locked, blinds drawn, and clerks sent home. Signs quickly appeared on many store fronts: "Union Holiday - closed till further notice."³³

In answer to the threat of pulling out the employees of the other large industries of the town if the distillery did not come to some agreement with its workers, the management of Fleischmann's asserted: "The union men can't walk out of this plant without the notice that their contract calls for. We are going to run this plant just as long as possible. If we can get help to drive away the pickets, or do it ourselves, we're going to do it."³⁴ Pickets to the number of one hundred, albeit quiet and orderly, had halted the night shift at Fleischmann's, and another detachment had marched upon the Corn Products plant. It was then that the sheriff called for the military. Apparently the military authorities were not convinced that the Guardsmen were yet needed in Pekin, for they did not march.

The comment of Fleischmann's management hit the weak spot in all general strikes: the existence of contracts not lapsing conveniently at the moment for calling the strike. It is the contract and its importance in the eyes of the A. F. L. leaders which again and again has brought down upon a local general strike committee either condemnation or active intervention by the top men of the American Federation of Labor. Pekin was no exception. President William Green sent in to the strike area his representative, William Schoenberg. It was the latter's presence in town, and the threat of the Pekin business men to reopen their shops and businesses under police protection, whether the strike was called off or not, that brought a sudden announcement from Frank Mahoney, chairman of the general strike publicity committee: "A special meeting of the Pekin

Trades and Labor Assembly, after due consideration and after being informed through the Hon. Martin Durkin... that the American Distillery Company has agreed to keep the plant shut down and meet the representatives of the unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor with the intent of reaching a satisfactory agreement, decided to terminate the central labor holiday immediately." (Italics added.)³⁵ Mr. Mahoney's release further stated that the Trades Assembly would do its utmost to obtain the resignation of the police chief on account of his "biased and unlawful acts against organized labor." The strike leaders claimed that they had won seniority rights, the rehiring of dismissed men, collective bargaining, and abolition of the speed-up system.³⁶

Heavy losses were incurred by business and labor, as usual in a serious shutdown of this character. It was estimated that labor lost \$50,000 in pay, and that the distillery company alone lost \$100,000 a day. The Mayor put the community loss for the three days of general strike at a cool half million dollars.³⁷

Pekin's general strike illustrates the manner in which the original purpose is obscured by a challenge to the government, and the repercussions that result. The right to unionize and be recognized was the basic dispute. A close second was the behavior of the city police, which had apparently continued over many months. But the desire to see the police chief fired was almost greater, at the peak of the strike, than the basic aim of securing for their colleagues at the distillery company's plant the recognition that was their legal right.

The reaction of the public was at first that of acceptance under the threat of damage if the business of the town were not closed down; but, had the military actually been sent into Pekin, the town would have opened up at once despite the strike committee. The Christian Century editorialized: "A strike may be called; but a general strike has to be enforced by violence or the threat of violence. That means that the control of an entire area is taken over, temporarily at least, by what is in effect a soviet. At that point, the American spirit protests and the strike breaks down."³⁸

Wilmington - Shadow of a Strike

A N. Y. Times report from Wilmington, Delaware, sent on the evening of Friday, April 2, 1937, informed its readers:

A general strike was called tonight by the Wilmington Central Labor Union and Building Trades Council for six o'clock tomorrow morning, following the breakdown of efforts to reach an agreement in a 19-day-old strike of truck drivers and helpers.

Delegates of 33 locals, with almost 3,500 members, had given a committee of five power to call a general strike if no settlement could be reached in the truck drivers' strike, in which union leaders claim 650 workers are out.³⁹

The date on which the general strike was called, April 2, was precisely ten days before the U. S. Supreme Court made public its vital decisions which were to give the tag of constitutionality to the much flouted National Labor Relations Act, or "Wagner Act." Up until April 12, 1937, it was anybody's guess whether or not the Supreme Court would uphold the many critical decisions rendered by the National Labor Relations Board, often only to have those decisions suffer "the Law's delay" or "the proud man's contumely."

Inasmuch as these decisions of the Supreme Court were still to be handed down, employers in Wilmington were by no means sold on negotiating with "out-of-town" labor leaders. Nor, for that matter, were they convinced that the Wagner Act was on the statute books to stay. Hence the struggle of unions at this period still included the fight for the right to organize, choose representatives, conduct collective bargaining, or receive recognition, if need be through National Labor Relations Board action.

The general strike that hit Wilmington on Saturday, April 3, was something of a ghost strike. It was called for Saturday, on which most workers have at least a half holiday, if not a complete day off. It was a shadow-strike, in the second place, in that it was not too clearly felt or seen in the few hours during which it lasted. Most of the Building Trades' union members were already on sympathetic strike, while officials of other locals said they could not order their members out until they received authority from their international officers, and they doubted if this would be forthcoming.⁴⁰

The trouble in Wilmington started back in March, when between 200 and 250 members of Local 107 of the Brotherhood of Teamsters went on strike, allegedly without notice to their

employers. Local 107 was a Philadelphia local, and it was Philadelphia wage rates that the members wanted. That meant \$48.50 a week for drivers, whereas in Wilmington their existing wages were said to be \$25-\$35 a week of five and a half to six days. Peaceful picketing started at six o'clock Monday morning, with the police on hand even earlier.⁴¹

The union alleged that the police were "interfering" with their picketing, and that, if the interference continued, the union would call out all the rest of the 600 truck drivers in town and appeal to the Central Labor Union (A. F. L.) for a general sympathy strike. The police contended that they were taking no sides; that two policemen were stationed at each plant day and night, and that over a quarter of a million dollars' worth of freight was tied up in the warehouses.⁴² The police admitted that they were giving protection to convoys of perishable goods.⁴³ They declared that local merchants who had sent their own delivery trucks to the warehouses of one or other of the six big long-distance trucking concerns in the walkout had had their drivers threatened by the strikers.⁴⁴

On March 20 a near-riot occurred when one of the out-of-town trucking companies announced that it would close down the local office and move a convoy of its large trucks into Maryland, under Wilmington police protection to the city line.⁴⁵ This act may have been a signal to the union. In any case the very next day the drivers and helpers of thirty-two local trucking concerns found their places picketed and their drivers and helpers out. Wholesale grocers were hit by the strike, and so were the 400 stores they serviced in the city.⁴⁶ The only companies not affected were those which delivered milk, bread, and fuel. Mr. Krumboch, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 107, declared that during the strike all public and private institutions would be served with necessities.⁴⁷

Slowly a handful of long-distance and local trucking concerns signed contracts, but the majority remained unconvinced, and all companies affected formed a Defense Committee of Employers to combat "illegal" tactics of the union. Henceforth all negotiations were to be conducted by the employers through their legal representative, Mr. Arthur G. Logan, Wilmington attorney. The statement was made that the employers were unwilling to negotiate with out-of-town labor organizers. This was a reference to Edward Krumboch, in Wilmington to organize a branch of his local.⁴⁸

On March 25 some 300 employers operating trucks of some kind in Wilmington refused to enter into negotiations with the Teamsters' Union, after an almost unanimous meeting in the Chamber of Commerce offices. Simultaneously a big local building contractor announced that he was suspending work valued at half a million dollars; that he could last six months, and would recognize neither the truck union nor the Building Trades' Council unions; that his men were not union members and did not wish to be. Mr. Logan had obtained this employer reaction because of alleged local violence and the lack of local control over the Teamsters' Union.⁴⁹ As a further step in resistance to the union demands, the Wilmington Sash and Door Company secured a temporary injunction against picketing.⁵⁰

As the days passed the temper of both sides grew less amenable. March 27 saw Mr. Logan stating: "In view of the Sheriff's refusal to deputize employers and employees, in order that property and life can be protected, the policy committee advised the merchants to operate their trucks with armed employees, but that any guns carried should not be concealed."⁵¹ The sheriff replied that those who had asked for their own non-union employees to be deputized had refused to assume responsibility in damage cases; that his own deputies were unarmed.⁵² The refusal of the employers to negotiate with any but their own employees or their "legally elected representatives," and "not imported agitators" was reiterated by Mr. Logan.⁵³

A conference was held in the offices of the Chamber of Commerce at which there were present the Governor, the Mayor, the Attorney General, and the Superintendent of the State Police. It was believed that a crisis would soon result if the various companies were permitted to arm their drivers.⁵⁴ The union then called out all of its members, whether under new contract or not, estimated variously at 150 to 450. The new walkout hit those with new contracts. This action was the direct outcome of the arming of company drivers and the police escort of company shipments.⁵⁵

The April 1 Journal bore the news that one hundred foremen (of trucking companies) had been deputized as policemen.⁵⁶ The chairman of the Employers' Central Committee claimed that the truck strike was illegal because the union required them to sign contracts that would pledge a union shop.⁵⁷ Meanwhile the press began to broadcast news of scarcity of such commodities as perishable goods, fuel oil, meats, butter and sugar.⁵⁸

The effect, in fact, of a tight trucking strike was not unlike that of a general strike as far as supplies were concerned. "Public resentment," said the Journal editors, "is mounting daily because of the disorders and the interference with normal life."⁵⁹

General Strike Proposed

On the same evening, April 1, 150 delegates in the Central Labor Union appointed a five-man committee with power to call a general strike. Significantly, all five men were members of the Building Trade unions. If a general strike were called, it was said, 3,500 union men would be involved.⁶⁰

On Friday, April 2, Secretary-Treasurer Krumboch offered the city a truce. The city-wide strike of truck drivers would be called off, and only those twenty-five companies that had not signed contracts would still have their drivers and helpers on strike and their places picketed. The union's cruising cars would be taken off the streets. Negotiation with the twenty-five firms would be by groups determined by similar lines of business. The twenty-five would have to agree not to move trucks. As each group reached a settlement, that part of the strike would be called off forthwith.⁶¹

An hour or two after that announcement there was a meeting of the five-man strike committee with Governor McMullen, Mayor Bacon, and Federal Conciliator Edward McDonald. The trucking employers, however, failed to attend. At the close of the meeting the Secretary-Treasurer of the Central Labor Union (A. F. L.) informed the press: "The Committee is still open for arbitration or conciliation until 6 o'clock tomorrow morning [Saturday]."⁶² An hour before this decision the Governor and the Mayor had left the meeting and gone to their hotel to await the news from the Central Labor Union that the strike had been called off. The phone rang, but it was not the message of cheer expected. It was to tell the Governor and the Mayor that the "out-of-town agitators," Krumboch and Cohen, Teamsters' Union officials, had been arrested by the police on a charge of assault and battery, and that the Federal Conciliator had been forced into the patrol wagon along with them, until he was identified by the press.

So the fat was in the fire, and there was nothing the C. L. U. could do but declare the general strike for six o'clock Saturday morning.⁶³ In the meantime the Employers' Policy Committee rejected the Teamsters' proposed truce, and repeated their view

that the strike was illegal in Delaware because, in seeking a union shop, it violated the right of freedom of contract.⁶⁴ Edward Krumboch and Raymond Cohen, charged with inciting to riot and with assault and battery, were released in bail of \$600 each.⁶⁵

Despite the unhappy denouement of Friday night, the general strike had run just over six hours when it was announced that the walkout would end at two o'clock that Saturday afternoon. This action was taken by the Central Labor Union at the request of the Governor and the Mayor, who brought word to the conference that the truck operators had agreed to peace negotiations within forty-eight hours. The ending of the general strike was conditional upon the outcome of these negotiations, the C. L. U. declared.⁶⁶

In the few hours during which the general strike was officially in effect there was scattered violence. Except for these minor disturbances and the absence of the taxi drivers, there was little to show for the strike order.⁶⁷ Flying squadrons of union men started cruising the city, spreading the word of the general strike to all workers. "The appeal met with only partial success." The trolley men failed to obey the walkout order, and thus Wilmington's chief transportation facility was not tied up. Labor men admitted off the record that the strike had not been very effective. Save for the taximen, the longshoremen, and the building trades members who were off work every Saturday in any case, there was no general walkout. It was a ghost-strike, not a general strike.⁶⁸

Once the order for a general walkout was cancelled, even if conditionally, it was pretty clear that the A. F. L. leaders and the local authorities would prevent it from happening again.⁶⁹ There were present in the city not only Vice-President Thomas O'Brien of the Teamsters, but William Hart of the State Federation of Labor, and J. J. Knoud, personal representative of William Green, President of the A. F. L., together with Michael McDermott of the International Brotherhood of Carpenters. Their combined presence evidently meant one thing only: "These labor leaders from outside, it is understood, came here at the request of Mr. Green and Mr. Hart to help straighten out the local labor situation and to prevent, if possible, any further danger of a general strike, a movement which had been fostered by some of the younger and more hot-headed of the local labor men." (*Italics added.*)⁷⁰

During the two-week "truce" came the banner headline news in the Wilmington Journal that the U.S. Supreme Court had held the National Labor Relations Act constitutional. The truce ended with a stalemate, and the negotiators left the city for the time being. It is significant that the strike did not start again.⁷¹ William Green had sent his special representative to Wilmington as he did in the general strikes of Terre Haute and Pekin. There is no question that in all three cases his representatives were hostile to the general strike weapon.

Two facts may be added at this point. As the result of a meeting of 250 employers in the Chamber of Commerce offices, the Wilmington Central Employers' Committee, with its directing group, the Employers' Policy Committee, was retained as a permanent body. The reasons for retention were given as follows: (1) It would provide a unified agency for combatting unfair demands from any union organization; (2) it would provide a negotiating body on such occasions; (3) it would see that its own members paid fair and equitable wages to their employees.⁷² The other fact concerned the Teamsters' Local 107. In August, 1937, with Robert Hill as business manager, and with new offices in the Merritt Hotel Building, it had reached a strength of over 800 Wilmington truck drivers, and had some 200 drivers in Lower Delaware and the Delmarva area. "A strong virile organization," commented the Wilmington Labor Herald.⁷³

Lansing — a "Synthetic Strike"

The episodes recorded of Terre Haute and of Pekin were both self-styled "labor holidays," yet they were clearly general strikes. The Lansing, Michigan, occurrence on June 7, 1937, was not a true general strike, though it too was called a "labor holiday." Nevertheless, for purposes of clarification as to the essence of the general strike, the labor holiday at Lansing will be briefly examined.

The results of these three labor holidays, as seen by the public eye, were the same. Business and industry were shut down, and the city affected was under the temporary control of organized labor. The Terre Haute and Pekin strikes, however, were the outcome of common labor action and approval by the many unions in those two cities, while in Lansing the U. A. W. was the organizing and solely responsible union concerned with the calling of the holiday. Although the rest of organized labor

in Lansing was very much involved in the results, the decision and the action of the U. A. W. was imposed upon the other unions, willing or unwilling, just as its rule (or anarchy) was imposed upon the city as a whole.

In each of the first two cities there was a joint strike committee — one essential criterion of a true general strike — and the vote was given by a score or two of trade unions or by their unofficial representatives. In other words, there was at least a gesture of democracy. In a minor degree, moreover, there was some planning involved. In Lansing, on the other hand, the labor holiday was a snap judgment, an almost instantaneous decision to retaliate upon the authorities for arrests made in the small hours of the same morning.

Those were the days when the new C. I. O. was fighting vigorously to seize from the A. F. L. many of its new and restive local unions. Furthermore, the Supreme Court had just been heard from in favor of the National Labor Relations Board. For the first time workers began to feel that the law might be on their side, and that their actions to get it enforced could no longer with impunity be met by injunctions and arrests.

The new C. I. O. locals were not too logical as to which of the new national unions they should join. (Even some years later the workers in a plant manufacturing steel bedsprings were put into the national union of the United Steel Workers.) In Lansing the natural organization to which workers turned was the United Automobile Workers of America, since so much of Michigan industry in that area was based upon the automobile. Hence it was not too strange that the workers of the Capitol City Wrecking Company belonged to Local 182 of the U. A. W. of A.

Finally, to get the contemporary feelings of labor and management at the time of the Lansing "holiday," it is necessary to remember that the Memorial Day "massacre" at the Republic Steel Company plant in South Chicago had just happened on May thirtieth. America was plagued with strikes, as much because of labor's growing sense of power as because a powerful minority of large industry simply refused to recognize that the time had now come when the Wagner Act was considered constitutional by the U. S. Supreme Court. On both sides tempers were on edge.

The Lansing Industrial News, "endorsed by the Lansing A. F. L.," reported Judge Leland Carr's injunction prohibiting interference with the company's business and denying the right

of picketing. This news appeared under a banner headline, "Workers Defy Court Order" on Friday, June 4, 1937.⁷⁴ Local 182 U. A. W. A. held that the injunction made illegal the right to strike for protection of the job, "a hollow and meaningless right without the right to enforce it with picketing and demonstration." It bewailed the precedent, which, it said, would apply to organized labor throughout the state of Michigan.⁷⁵

Told to vacate the property of the company by three o'clock on Thursday, the union was massing workers on the picket line at five P.M. Lester Washburn, President of Local 182, took charge of picketing. The U. A. W. A. "flying squads" were conspicuous.⁷⁶ Next morning at the witching hour of two o'clock seven arrests were made by the sheriff. Criminal warrants were issued for some eighteen persons in all. Of the seven served on Friday morning, one was upon Mrs. Lester Washburn, for violation of the injunction. Her arrest occurred despite her request that she be allowed to arrange first for the care of her children, who would otherwise be left alone in the house. When news of the arrests reached the union, some 12,000 workers were called out of all plants in Lansing. For a while all traffic was stopped on Washington Avenue. Then the U. A. W. A. Flying Squadron began to direct traffic and to take over other police duties.⁷⁷ "Incensed by the arrest of eight pickets, the union members halted all downtown traffic and nearly all business, picketed police headquarters, the City Hall and the Capitol, threatened a jail delivery, staged a pitched battle with college students at East Lansing, and in the end yielded only to intervention by Governor Frank Murphy."⁷⁸ As luck would have it, this was the day on which the Knights Templars were to hold convention in Lansing. Early in the morning two to five thousand workers from the auto plants swarmed into the business section, acted as traffic officers, and intentionally snarled up the morning traffic. Drivers abandoned stalled cars by hundreds and walked to work. Then for an hour demonstrators paraded through the city and ended at the City Hall and the Capitol, where they erected a temporary loud-speaker. In the meantime the taxicabs and buses gave up the struggle, and the Knights Templars, like the business men, had to walk.

Flying squadrons of the strikers moved through and beyond the central city to see that all places of business closed for the "holiday." Either by police action or by that of the strikers, all liquor stores were shut. Most places obeyed the request to

close. Even the banks refused to cash checks, since there was no sufficient police protection. The police were content to remain at the jail and the City Hall. A jail delivery was threatened by four o'clock unless the arrested persons had been released. By this time the Governor was in the Capitol, and the strike leaders were able to announce that they were negotiating with him. There was, therefore, no jail delivery; but before nightfall Washburn's wife and the other arrested pickets were released for later trial.⁷⁹

The one appearance of violence during the holiday was due to disobedience of strike instructions. The strikers in some numbers wandered over the line into East Lansing, where the State College is located, and started to close eating places. This aroused the anger of students and townsfolk, and the former seized eight strikers and threw them into the Red Cedar River, after the fashion of the Freshman-Sophomore customs. The dunkees went back to Lansing and returned with reinforcements, only to be met by a thousand students and several hundred townsfolk. A bloody riot was prevented at this point by one Earl Harrington, a shop steward, who ordered the strikers back to Lansing. A few days later the President of the college received a letter from the House of Representatives, signed by many of the lawmakers: "We wish to express our appreciation of the very prompt and efficient way in which the students dealt with a labor dispute last Monday afternoon."⁸⁰ The strikers subsequently attempted to explain the fracas by saying that they thought the R. O. T. C. uniforms many of the students were wearing were National Guardsmen's uniforms.

The day ended with a celebration on the Capitol lawn, where the strikers learned that the Capitol City Wrecking Company had agreed to parley. The aftermath was significant. A Law and Order League was formed by a local post of the American Legion on the Wednesday after the "holiday." The labor paper expressed fear that the vigilantes would be called out against striking workers, and be used by anti-labor employers to destroy the Lansing labor movement, which had grown too strong for them to control.⁸¹

Thus it appears that the results of a labor holiday such as that in Lansing may be greatly similar to those which follow a general strike, even to the formation of citizens' committees. Yet the likeness is still only in the results, not in the origin nor in the manner of control which one finds in a valid general strike.

Stamford — the "Lunch Hour" Strike

Stamford's "lunch hour" general strike of January 3, 1946, was the object of much comment running the gamut of truth, half-truth to sheer falsehood, ringing the changes all the way from Chard Powers Smith in Harpers to the professional crape-hanging columnists who saw blood in mud and revolution in the union shop. Despite Mr. Smith, Stamford, Connecticut, with a population of 65,000 at that time, was not the smallest American community to experience a general strike.⁸² That record goes to Pekin, Illinois, about one-third the size, which endured its general strike in February, 1936, ten years earlier. Nor, in American general strike history, is Stamford the only place where the strike committee was a joint one of A. F. L. and C. I. O. leaders. The same cooperation occurred in Rochester, New York, in May of the same year, 1946. Nor, yet again, was the city of Stamford "paralyzed," even for the three hours of organized cessation of work in industry and business.⁸³ There was no comparison in this respect with those other two small town general strikes which occurred ten and eleven years before in Terre Haute and Pekin. But in Stamford the attitude toward labor was infinitely pleasanter than in any of the other cities mentioned. In fact, it would be hard to find a community more ready to see labor's reason for "demonstration," and even to give it support. Much water had run over the legislative dam since 1935-1936, and small town organized labor was recognized for what it was — an important group of responsible and respectable citizens eager to take their part in civic life, and far removed from Pegler's picturesque but unrealistic labor thugs, bosses, and dupes.

The general strike was called by a Combined Labor Organization consisting of eight men, four for the C. I. O., four for the A. F. L., with Dave Abrams, head of Stamford's Political Action Committee and of its C. I. O. Industrial Council, as chairman. His secretary was Howard Johnson of the A. F. L. Union of Schick, Inc. Committees on Preparation and Publicity were set up by Abrams, and consisted equally of A. F. L. and C. I. O. men.

Stamford's "demonstration" was a protest against absence of negotiations "in good faith" on the part of the biggest plant in the city, Yale and Towne, when face-to-face with its union locals, "Lodges" Number 539 and 1557, of the International Association of Machinists, A. F. L. It was an even more indignant

protest at the invasion of the dispute by the State Police, when they forced their way through the massed machinists' pickets at the Yale and Towne plant, and made seven arrests. This had occurred in the last week of the old year. It was the immediate spark that started the general strike fire.⁸⁴

Under pressure from the National War Labor Board, Yale and Towne's wartime contract with the I. A. M. included Maintenance of Membership (the requirement that any union member maintain his membership in good standing for the duration of the contract) as its form of union security. When the war ended and the contract lapsed, the company refused to renew the maintenance of membership clause.

At this point, early in November, 1945, the workers in the Stamford plant went out on strike. The strikers sought a 30 per cent wage increase — about 17 cents an hour — to even up the loss in take-home pay due to cessation of war overtime. They asked, further, for a two-week annual vacation for each employee who had worked five years in the plant, together with the continuance of the maintenance of membership clause.

Weldon Monson, the company attorney, offered a wage increase of 14 per cent in take-home if the workers put in forty-five hours a week; but he admitted, on being challenged, that the company could not guarantee even a 40-hour week.⁸⁵

The company had at least six other plants besides the Stamford establishment with its 3,600 employee payroll. Absentee ownership and control was one of the complaints of the townsfolk. The secretary of the Chamber of Commerce commented indignantly to Mr. Smith: "If from the beginning we had been dealing only with local management and only with local labor, and each had had final authority to act, there would not have been any strike at all."⁸⁶ Mr. Smith in his investigation discovered that Yale and Towne, after seventy-nine years in Stamford as the chief business concern, had "acquired a local reputation for having a consistently repressive and inhuman labor policy."⁸⁷ Mr. Smith found in the emotions of "dozens of miscellaneous citizens" a "chronic anger at the company," though none of these citizens was a Yale and Towne striker.⁸⁸ Even the local paper, "the excellent Advocate," had "at last leaned editorially toward the strikers."⁸⁹ The Mayor of Stamford, in the public meeting for negotiations on January 3, accused by the company's attorney of being intimidated by the union, replied in some heat: "The only intimidation I've seen is from Yale and

Towne. The man doesn't live who can intimidate me, but because I would not send police down to crack skulls I've been slandered in the papers and photostats of editorials have been sent out all over the country...."90 The Stamford Advocate urged the company to accept in its new contract the maintenance of membership clause. During the three-hour walkout placards in store windows bore the words, "We are in the fight with you workers of Yale and Towne." Rather obviously the mayor, the police, and the people of Stamford were friendly to the strikers.⁹¹

The general strike, or "demonstration," as labor called it, went off with order and good humor. A large portion of the working population of Stamford converged on the Town Hall, where negotiations were in process. The police chief estimated the crowd in the area outside the hall to be "in excess of 10,000."⁹² After speeches from labor leaders, the majority of the marchers were back again at work by three o'clock, and business places that had closed reopened, as did the movie houses. There was much talk of the Combined Labor Group's calling another "demonstration" the following week if the Yale and Towne dispute had not then been settled. In fact, that call never went out. Yet the Yale and Towne strike was not settled until early in April, when a three-man Federal Conciliation panel, which had held labor and management in almost continuous session, achieved an agreement.⁹³

It is interesting to find that, while Yale and Towne's employees were enrolled in A. F. L. unions, the move to make use of a general strike or lunch-hour demonstration came first from the C. I. O. A C. I. O. man was elected chairman of the eight-man group that ran the strike, and an A. F. L. member became the secretary. There was no "remote control" from the Internationals. If anything, the general strike greatly strengthened the feeling for local fusion of the dual labor movement.

Mr. Smith had a significant conclusion to make on his investigation. Beneath the upper crust of large business, where there was difference of opinion on the Yale and Towne dispute, "the majority of the public was for the striking unions without reservation."⁹⁴ This support by the general public undoubtedly was aided by the general orderly behavior of organized labor before and during the demonstration. While Pegler implied that all kinds of violence had occurred in Stamford, the mayor asserted, "There has been not a touch of violence, not a cent of property damage."⁹⁵ But mass picketing there was at Yale and

Towne, with resultant difficulty for management to get in and out of the plant; yet when the local police set out to make way through the massed pickets for the foreman, the latter told them to "lay off and forget it."96

Stamford was a little city of 65,000 souls; yet, after World War II had ended, it took a hundred and fifty days of strike to get a renewal of contract with the main industry in town, with a three-hour general strike to boot. The demands of the I. A. M. union were far from unusual at that period. Some, like the two-week vacation after five years of service, were quite normal. The company's attorney gave a hint of the reason for both strikes. Said Mr. Monson at the January 3 public meeting: "Nearly a century of manufacturing experience convinces us that only in an open shop can management best attain its twin objectives of quality product and efficiency of production."97 Stamford city seemed to feel differently. It seemed to believe that some degree of democracy in industry was needful to keep democracy in political and social life. But Stamford was unable to affect out-of-town control and ownership. And Stamford labor's lunch-hour demonstration was no more able to speed a settlement with Yale and Towne than was the International Association of Machinists with its 150-day strike. The general strike caught the headlines, it drew attention of a public wider than Stamford to the situation, and it gave Pegler a topic for his column. Perhaps in fairness it should be added that it did not detract from labor's reputation in the city of Stamford, and it did make a desire for local A. F. L. -C. I. O. fusion stronger than ever.

Chapter XI

AMERICAN GENERAL STRIKES 1935-52: II

Lancaster, Pa. - A General Strike Succeeds

Once again the public was offered the paradox of a general strike called by the A. F. L. Central Labor Union against all the rules and regulations of the American Federation. Unlike many of the earlier general strikes recorded in this book, this sympathy strike in the Pennsylvania city occurred some years after the National Labor Relations Act had been held constitutional by the Supreme Court. Correctly speaking, therefore, the issue of the right to organize did not enter. This time the walk-out pivoted upon the effort to compel a trolley and bus company, the Conestoga Transportation Company, to accept arbitration. A strike to compel arbitration is somewhat rare, though in 1934 the San Francisco general strike was called, in part, to achieve that end.

Three times in less than six months the bus and trolley men tied up the company's service in order to enforce demands for higher wages and several "fringe" issues. Each time - except the second, which was a single-day strike - the company tried to break the strike with nonunion "volunteer" workers. Each time violence resulted. The union employees were members of the A. F. L. Amalgamated Association of Streetcar, Electric Railway and Motor Coach employees. Their old contract lapsed on September 1, 1945, and a strike lasting twenty-seven days ensued. Agreement was reached to extend the old contract pending negotiations, with arbitration on such issues as would not yield to collective bargaining. Negotiations broke down when the company offered five cents an hour increase and the union rejected the offer. From that date, November 19, the union tried in vain to get the company to submit to arbitration. The company parried by declaring that the union was no longer the legal bargaining agent.¹

The union then empowered its officers to call a strike, but the call was postponed (as Christmas was too near), except for a token stoppage on December 9. The next long strike began on February 6, 1946, on "Lancaster's worst day of the winter, when the streets were glazed with ice."² Trouble started, as usual, when the company, under city police

protection, tried to run the service with nonunion drivers: "Police arrested two union officials...after clubbing back transit strikers to permit continuance of partial service by the Conestoga Transportation Company.... Charged with incitement to riot they were freed under \$1000 bail."³ On Sunday night, February 17, the Central Labor Union, in quick protest, by a unanimous vote of twenty-three affiliated unions, declared a general strike, to begin immediately and to continue until the transportation dispute was settled.⁴

On Monday, the first day of the general "no work period," as local labor called it, pickets stopped all incoming trucks and closed most of the city's butcher shops, halted some long-distance buses, six trucking firms, three foundries, and sundry smaller plants. The major industries were not affected on the first day, as many workers said they had not received official word from their unions when they went to work that morning; hence they walked through the picket lines.⁵

Some hope was given to the city by the announcement of the Federal conciliator, John R. Murray, that the union and the Conestoga Company would meet Tuesday for negotiations. A. H. Keeler, one of the two union leaders arrested, declared that his union had reached its objective, "to sit down at the conference table and get down to real collective bargaining."⁶

In the meantime the Conestoga Company abandoned its efforts to run a skeleton service with "volunteers" in the face of mass picketing by hundreds of strikers, and a huge crowd of spectators gathered around the trolley and bus barns. Acting Mayor Coulter ordered all city police away from the barns, and from protection of strikebreakers, and turned over to Sheriff Pfenniger the problem of protection of the company and the city. The Acting Mayor had held that the situation was "wholly beyond the control" of the city's police force of sixty men. Informed of Governor Martin's alerting of the State Troopers, the Sheriff stated that he would act if violence occurred, but that he would not take sides, and would not "forcibly break picket lines."⁷

Nature added her blows to those of organized labor on the second day of the general strike. A nine-inch snowstorm and high winds made going exceedingly difficult for those who had to travel. A survey made by the press showed that the second day of the strike had closed the city's six movie theaters, all large chain food stores, six trucking concerns, three foundries, and

a meat-packing house. There were no beer deliveries. Electrical supply houses and two contracting firms reported that their A. F. L. members were not working. In nearby Manheim the strike stopped the large asbestos plant employing 1,200 workers, and greatly increased absenteeism in the R. C. A. - Victor plant. Four bus lines from out of town, accustomed to using the Union Bus Depot, turned to the Pennsylvania Railroad Station, just outside the city limits. With the city covered with deep snow, the fuel oil dealers admitted that they were low in fuel reserves, since "refinery trucks would not drive into town through picket lines."⁸

The C. I. O. unions had, in the meantime, evidenced their support of the strike by offering to provide a thousand carbarn pickets each day as long as it lasted. On the other hand, Amish and Mennonite farmers and other townspeople crossed picket lines to shop for food. They and the union men exchanged nods.⁹ The Philadelphia Record editorially appealed to William Green to call off the strike. The editorial tacked back and forth as it argued that the Conestoga employees had "just grievances and extreme provocation," that the company had not only broken the agreement to resort to arbitration, but had "even withdrawn recognition of the union." Yet, pontificated the editor, no general strike had succeeded except that in Russia in 1917.¹⁰ The Harrisburg Patriot in an editorial, "Another Tale of Two Cities," drew quite premature comparison between the Stamford general strike and that in Lancaster. The article said that public authority in Lancaster had made sure that streetcar employees could reach their work "without being sluggish on the picket line," whereas Stamford police had merely looked on while strikers took over a privately owned plant and blocked the entrance against the owners.¹¹

For a while it looked as if the transit and general strikes would last several days. After four sessions of negotiations, the disappointing word came through on Wednesday evening that there was still deadlock. Happily, by 2:40 A.M. on Thursday morning the Times reporter was able to wire that the settlement had been reached, and that it would be put before the trolley and bus workers at nine o'clock that morning.¹² By afternoon on Thursday, February 21, two hundred transit men had approved the settlement, which called for a total wage raise of twelve cents, spread over time.¹³ Shortly after the news of settlement was broadcast, the general strike was called off,

and pickets vanished from the streets. Chain stores and movie houses rapidly reopened. C. L. U. leaders predicted that all establishments would be in operation again by Friday.

The buses ran once more, but owing to frozen tracks and deep snow the trolleys did not reappear immediately. It would be difficult to contend that the general strike did not succeed, when for so many months previously the union had been trying in vain, through strikes and unsuccessful negotiations, to attain the same end. There may still be valid criticism that this strike was a challenge to the government of the city. In this case, though the public may have been swinging away from labor, the actual heads of the governments involved, the Acting Mayor, the Sheriff, and the Governor, refused to take up the gauntlet unless violence occurred.¹⁴ The Mayor even withdrew police protection from the Conestoga car barns. As it happened, violence did not develop during the general strike, though it had been present when the police had endeavored, just before, to "protect" the car barns, and to escort nonunion volunteer drivers.

From labor's point of view there seemed to be no ill results comparable to the legislative aftermath of the British strike. Nor were there prison sentences for Lancaster's C. L. U. or transit union officers, as there were for the leaders of the Winnipeg strike. For once, moreover, the calling of a general strike with no definite date for its ending, save the settlement of the transit dispute, did not react upon the effectiveness of the walkout. In fact, the "no work period" was, if anything, more complete on the second day of the strike than on the first. It was, nevertheless, a very dangerous gamble for the C. L. U., but, thanks to the Federal conciliator and the two parties to the dispute, a settlement was reached with what seems comparative speed when one thinks of the long months of failure preceding the general walkout.

Perhaps it can be summed up by saying that, for once, the original purpose of the general strike was not obscured by the subsequent irritations arising from it. It might be added, however, that the frequent efforts of A. F. L. unions in this and other cases recorded to avoid the consequences of ordering a general strike by terming it a "labor holiday" or a "no-work period" fooled no one, and made no difference in the intrinsic character of the sympathetic walkout.

Rochester, N. Y., "Death for a Day," 1946

It happened in Rochester because an out-of-town politician tangled with an out-of-town labor organizer, and because the men who steered the administration of that city of 300,000 in the twentieth century were thinking in terms of the nineteenth. For twenty-two hours 'No buses or taxis moved; no trolleys stirred from the barns, no wheel turned in the steel, furniture, upholstery and clothing factories.... On the streets a two week accumulation of trash and garbage drew flies. The third largest city in New York had a general strike....'15

The "Open Shop Bastion," as Business Week entitled the city of Rochester, even as late as 1953 had only 20 per cent of all its workers organized, as against nearly 36 per cent for the country as a whole.16 In 1946 the "third largest city in New York State" went through the trying experience of a one-day general strike, due to a cumulation of circumstances that should not have happened in the mid-twentieth century.

First of all, the City Manager fired, with less than twenty-four hours' notice, 489 city employees by the simple method of abolishing their jobs and advertising for bids from private contractors. This was an effort to forestall the formation of a union in the Department of Public Works. The City Manager's effort backfired, and he had on his hands a sympathetic walk-out of ash truck and garbage truck drivers.

The Chief of Police, backing the City Manager, made mass arrests of over 250 pickets and labor leaders, and flung them into jail. All this while the charter for the city managership contained a provision calling for recognition of unions and city employees. The city administration, however, ruggedly refused to recognize any union or "outside" union leader who was not a city employee. Only intense pressure from the Governor at Albany led to a final settlement, with some face-saving for the city management, but a virtual victory for Rochester labor.

Through it all the local press seemed unable or unwilling to recognize that relations between employers and workers had radically changed with the placing on the statute books of the National Labor Relations Act, and in the State of New York the "Little Wagner Act" of 1937, which together assured workers of the right to organize, choose representatives, and conduct collective bargaining with their respective employers through these representatives. True, there might be serious disagreement about the right of state, county, or city employees ever

to strike; but to organize, to choose representatives, and to bargain collectively through them, to American labor of 1946 were widely accepted and practiced customs.

In Rochester it was different. Rochester's open shop practice for generations ran alongside a paternalism in industry that gave to its employees the top in wages, fringe benefits, entertainment, subsidized cafeterias, medical care and pensions — mostly a jump ahead of the union rates and standards. The biggest exception to this picture of open shop was the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Between this union and its farsighted employers there had been no strikes for over thirty years.¹⁷ Yet a respected Rochester citizen made comment to the writer that the clothing industry leaders were looked down upon as "second class citizens" because they had admitted into the city large-scale industrial unionism. It was, however, seven years after the general strike in Rochester before the National Labor Relations Board gave official word to the United Auto Workers, C.I.O., that they could go ahead and bargain collectively with the General Motors' Rochester Products' Division for the 4,500 employees involved; so slowly did unionization progress in Rochester.

A general strike in an "open shop bastion" is sufficiently unusual to make Rochester worthy of attention. An additional factor that made it noteworthy was the close cooperation of the local A. F. L. and the C. I. O. — such close cooperation, in fact, that some considerable criticism was later leveled at the A. F. L. for allowing it to happen. The critics asserted that, but for the equal representation of the C. I. O. and the A. F. L. on the Strike Strategy Committee, there would have been no general strike.¹⁸ It was unusual, in the third place, because at the height of the dispute, when the press was taking the side of the city management, a group of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish clergy endeavored to bring about a settlement that recognized the right even of municipal workers to organize and be represented.

City Employees Move to Organize

Late in April, 1946, over 150 city employees, from all departments, held meetings to plan the organization of a local union in the city services. Adrian Mitten, A. F. L. State Organizer for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers, was present in the city.¹⁹ The outcome was a charter granted to Rochester Department of Public Works, Local 817.

This group was scheduled to meet in Carpenters' Hall on May 22. Alphonse Rossi was made temporary chairman. It was pertinent to note that A. F. L. unions representing government employees had constitutions forbidding the use of the strike.²⁰ A headline in the A. F. L. Weekly ran: "Municipal Workers Flock to Join Union in City."²¹

Just before the fireworks began, City Manager Cartwright made public announcement that, as a result of studies made by the city's Civil Service Commission, there would shortly be a reclassification of city employees, which would provide for many of the ranks an "appreciable salary increase," and that many hourly paid workers would be reclassified on an annual basis. It was also known at the City Hall that the new salary schedules would make permanent the existing emergency pay increase of \$150 for all employees whose salaries were under \$3,000.²²

Outside of Rochester's school system the city employed some four thousand persons, one thousand of whom were police or firemen and were not to be affected by the reclassification.²³ The announcement released by the City Manager was considered a reply to the current organizing campaign conducted by Mr. Mitten.

A bombshell was cast into an otherwise quiet city by City Manager Cartwright on May 15, when he ordered 489 Department of Public Works jobs abolished, the work involved to be done henceforth by private contractors. He further ordered all D. P. W. equipment off the streets and in the Dewey Avenue garage by five o'clock that afternoon. This edict cut in half the Department of Public Works. The services affected would be tied up for about a week, inasmuch as the legal requirements called for advertising for bids from private contractors.

The City Manager's explanation of this sudden decision was the determination of city employees to persist in "tactics that are not in the best interests of the city services." He contended that unionization would lead to an "exorbitant increase in the cost of important municipal services." Finally, he held, "A public employee's first and only responsibility is to the public."²⁴

Perhaps the aspect that roused most intense criticism was the fact that less than twenty-four hours' notice was given to the workers whose jobs were abolished. The positions closed out varied from common labor to that of a foreman, and ranged

in pay from \$188 to \$2,800.²⁵ Between 800 and 1,000 city employees woke on the morning of May 16 to find their jobs either gone or inoperative. There was a heavy police guard at the Dewey Avenue garage, and some 300 ash truck drivers alleged that they were not allowed into the garage, and so were forced to cease work.²⁶ Anthony Capone, President of the A. F. L. Central Trades and Labor Council, claimed that this was not a strike, but a lockout. In the meantime, Local 389 of the Teamsters' Union wired to the independent city haulers that if they attempted to supply trucking services to the city the Teamsters' Union would consider its contracts with them broken.²⁷

By a seven to one vote the City Council directed the City Manager to get bids from private contractors. The one adverse vote was that of a Councilman who was a member of the barbers' union. City Manager Cartwright held that there was no union of city workers, and therefore nothing to negotiate and no strike; but somewhat illogically he asserted that "no group of public employees has the right to strike against the public interest." The ash gang drivers were informed that they must report to the garage or be fired; that those with veterans' preference who disobeyed would face civil service charges.²⁸

Signs were now evident that there might be a joint action on the part of local A. F. L. and C. I. O. unions. Carpenters' Hall, A. F. L. headquarters, was full of dismissed city workers assembled to draft plans. John Cooper, once A. F. L., but in 1946 the head of the local C. I. O., shook hands on the platform with Anthony Capone, and pledged support from the C. I. O. A meeting of the C. I. O. unions was called at Amalgamated Hall for May 17.²⁹

City engineers were busily engaged estimating the cost of street flushing, ash and garbage collection, and operation of the disposal plant. City street reconstruction and paving was at a standstill with the dismissal of the D. P. W. incumbents. Rubbish collection halted because the drivers would not take out the trucks, Commissioner Wagener reported. The drivers said the police would not allow them to pass into the garage. Although no disturbances were reported, the police were on considerable overtime.³⁰ The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle editorially was unable to see "how unionization of public employees in any category... is compatible with the nature of public service and its obligations." It expressed full support of the City Manager and the City Council in their stand.³¹

On May 17 public works facilities were at a complete standstill. Sixty-one ash truck drivers who had walked out in sympathy with the 489 dismissed from the city jobs were themselves instantly fired. Only the sewers and the water supply continued as usual, though fifty maintenance men in the sewer department walked out in sympathy, while waterworks repair crews received union overtures to leave their jobs. City gasoline trucks (for the fire department) were not running, and gasoline was transported in five-gallon cans.³²

The Democrat and Chronicle ventured further comment on May 18. It believed that City Manager Cartwright acted as he did to forestall employee unionization "in an outside union," and accused Adrian Mitten, Organizer for the State, County and Municipal Workers, of "urging Rochester city employees to allow garbage to be piled up until the city recognizes the union."³³ Nothing was said of the 489 employees so summarily dismissed in the interest of having private contractors do the work.

The Unions Join Battle

The official A. F. L. weekly came out on May 17 with an editorial, "Against Public Interest!"

The City Fathers have thrown down a challenge which labor cannot ignore. . . .

The City Manager implies that unionization of city employees is a threat to the public interest. . . .

Could unionization of garbage collectors and highway laborers impair the 'public interest' any more than unionization of bus drivers?

Finally, the proposal to turn the work over to a private contractor shows plainly the insincerity of the whole statement. It is certainly going to cost more money. . . .³⁴

The same issue pointed out that a recent cut in the hours of work from forty-eight to forty per week had made inroads into the take-home pay. It was claimed that overtime had never been paid, even in winter, when city workers might be called on for a sixty-hour week.

A joint statement was published by the A. F. L. and C. I. O. asserting that the situation was "A strike of the city officials against the people of Rochester, whose health and sanitation conditions are now jeopardized."³⁵ Republican County

Chairman Broderick informed the people and the unions that labor leaders would not be allowed to tell the Republican Government of Rochester what to do; that no union hand could be in the government of the city. This was the comment to the press after a meeting of twenty-two out of the twenty-four ward leaders at Republican party headquarters.³⁶ It is significant that the twenty-four were shortly telling laid-off workers who subscribed to the city policy against unionization that a place awaited them on the city payroll. Obviously, the dismissal of the 489 had caught many persons who had not been involved in union activity.³⁷

Labor kept the issue vividly before the public. Forty-four men, claiming to be some of the 150 veterans whose jobs had been abolished, caused great excitement in an "I am an American Day" meeting by marching down one aisle of the Eastman Theater and out by another. A riot call brought fourteen police cars on the double, but "no disorder developed." Some of the signs carried by the forty-four bore the legend, "We joined the Army, why can't we join the union?" In the same meeting, when the chairman refused Capone of the Central Trades and Labor Council the microphone, he and a hundred others walked out of the theater.³⁸

By this time the local Democrat and Chronicle admitted editorially that the city employees had the right to organize, but not in an "outside" union. Appeals for economic betterment should be made to the City Manager, the Council, and the people of Rochester.³⁹

As if to support the unions' allegations of insincerity on the part of the city management which claimed economy as the reason for ending nearly 500 city jobs, on Monday, May 20, City Manager Cartwright reestablished the D. P. W. jobs and cancelled all requests for private contractors' bids. He claimed that over 200 men were back at work. It was reported that the men who returned did so relying upon the word of Republican executive committeemen that jobs awaited them. None had been asked about union membership. With the announcement of re-created jobs and the "back to work" reports, feelings were high at the entrance to the Dewey Avenue yards, and the police were out in force. The massed pickets finally withdrew to Carpenters' Hall, and no disorders occurred.

Mass Arrests

As if the vacillations of the City Manager's office had not been sufficiently unstabilizing in city labor relations, the next event brought the general strike threat much closer. For the first time in years, the police made mass arrests of labor leaders as they stood on private property (a gas station) near the Dewey Avenue yard by permission of the owner of the land. Those arrests included Capone, Mitten and Rossi. Bail was set at \$100 a head except for Mitten, who, because he was from "out of town," had bail for \$500. Ninety-five per cent of the 260 arrested had never before been in police hands. About one hundred were veterans of World War I or II. The jail was overflowing. Some slept on floors and some in the penitentiary barn on the hay.⁴⁰ The charge against the labor leaders and pickets was one of hurling epithets at workers entering the Dewey Avenue yards. The A. F. L. weekly paper described the mass arrests:

At exactly eight o'clock three hundred policemen armed with clubs and belt pistols, and personally led by Chief Henry P. Copenhagen, marched out from concealment in the plant, completely encircled the lot on which the men stood, and herded the entire group towards patrol cars and squad wagons. The men were loaded into the cars under the direction of Chief Copenhagen and packed off to jail. Several women were among the group seized. Among them a school teacher on her way to her classes....⁴¹

There seems some justification for the statement of the A. F. L. paper that "Rochester took a long stride toward Fascism" in the mass arrests. Reverend Anthony Perota, present at the close of the arrests, commented, "It is undemocratic, unintelligent and stupid to arrest people for disorderly conduct when no disorder exists." In the same issue of the Labor News the paper editorialized: "Fascism has come to Rochester and taken over the city. Personal rights no longer exist.... The only law recognized in the city today is the law of the policeman's club."⁴² The reference to Fascism concerned not only the mass arrests of labor leaders, but also the implications of the statement made by the city manager and Mr. Thomas Broderick, that the city would "deal with its employees only as individuals."⁴³

May 22 saw the Teamsters' Union Local 398, of which Capone was the business agent, declare a twenty-four hour holiday of protest against the mass arrests. They recommended to the Central Trades and Labor Council that a general city-wide strike be called when necessary. The Teamsters remained in Carpenters' Hall for the night, ready for a mass picket early on May 23.⁴⁴ Capone led the mass picket line despite his previous arrest, but this time the police did not disturb him, and this time he was flanked by the Rev. Antonio Perota, Chairman of the Citizens' Committee to Promote Industrial Peace, and minister of St. Marks Baptist Church, together with the Rev. J. Norman Carlson of the Lutheran Missions. The majority of the pickets were A. F. L. or C. I. O. leaders.⁴⁵

In the issue of May 23 the local Democrat and Chronicle veered again in its editorial: "What the union leaders are attempting is to force the city officials to violate the law and repudiate their sworn obligations to the people."⁴⁶ A letter in the same issue suggested that Mr. Broderick had only his office in Rochester, not his residence, and that he, therefore, like Adrian Mitten, was an "outsider."

Labor's Ultimatum

Failing to obtain a joint conference of labor and the Clergy's Committee with the City Manager, the Joint A. F. L. - C. I. O. Strategy Committee presented an ultimatum to the city Monday morning, May 27. Unless the city returned a satisfactory answer by ten o'clock that night, a general strike would be called. The ultimatum, signed by Anthony Capone, President of the Central Trades and Labor Council, and by Henry M. Steves, Chairman of the A. F. L. - C. I. O. Strategy Committee, said: "Organized labor cannot and will not stand idly by while high-handed acts of the Republican Rochester city administration jeopardize essential public services and violate the elementary rights of the people." The statement proceeded to list the offensive acts. The city had (1) fired 550 city employees without notice or just cause; (2) jeopardized the health of the people by stopping garbage and ash collections; (3) violated the State Constitution by refusing to permit employees to join a union of their own choosing; (4) defied the Constitution of the United States by illegally arresting 267 peaceful citizens who were peacefully picketing.

Labor demanded a quick resumption of essential services

with guarantees as to the rights of the entire citizenry of Rochester. The following were held to be the minimum requirements for conclusion of the labor crisis: "(a) All city employees to be reinstated with back pay and without discrimination. (b) The city must take their employees back with recognition of their right to form a union. (c) All charges against the illegally arrested citizens must be dropped."⁴⁷

The One-Day General Strike

Despite the warning of the previous day's events, the citizens of Rochester were taken by surprise on Tuesday morning, May 28, to find that they were in the midst of a general strike. The morning edition of the Democrat and Chronicle, Gannett-owned, had carried eight-column streamers asserting that the strike had been settled by Albany intervention, and that the 489 men dismissed would be free to return to their jobs without discrimination. City Manager Cartwright had agreed that the 267 arrested for picketing would have their cases dismissed in court, and employees would be free to join a union if they desired. The concession alleged to have been made by labor to the city administration was an agreement not to strike against the city government.⁴⁸

The explanation of the tangle over cancellation of the general strike seems to be that when State A. F. L. Secretary Harold Hanover, who with the Governor had worked out the agreement, telephoned Capone in Rochester to see if the Strategy Committee would go along with them and release the news, Capone replied that the deadline had already passed; that the city would have to add this clause to the settlement: "The city administration agrees to abide by the Constitution of the State of New York as per provisions of Article I, Section 17."⁴⁹ This Section 17 was added to the Constitution in 1938 after the people had voted for it. It ran: "Employees shall have the right to organize and to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing." So the general strike began, and that the city was not more crippled can be laid to the fact that labor organization was still in its infancy in Rochester, with the major industry sternly against unions. As it was, transportation, save for private autos, was tied up; so were the newspapers, since both the Typographers and the Newspaper Guild members refused to walk through the picket lines. What news reached the public came from hourly radio broadcasts. Plans were made for subsequent

days, but were not put into effect. By orders of the Strategy Committee the restaurants remained open and waitresses at work. Had the strike lasted longer, the restaurants would have closed, the barbers, bartenders, and others would have walked out.⁵⁰

All day Tuesday the first floor of the Powers Hotel "was a beehive of conflicting statements." Some rumors had Governor Dewey coming in person to settle the strike; others put the failure to settle without a strike at the door of the Strategy Committee. Most of these rumors were proved lacking in foundation.⁵¹ Thus for twenty-two hours no wheels turned, of buses, trolleys, garbage trucks, or factories. By Thursday, May 30, the Gannett paper could look backward with relief as the city returned to "normalcy." It was "a far more reassuring [picture] than that of Tuesday's Rochester, when the idling of some 30,000 members of union groups and sympathizers halted or impaired bus, subway and taxi service, newspaper publishing, delivery and trucking services of many kinds, and closed the theatres where many had intended to seek an escape from the situation."⁵² Private cars being the only remaining mode of transportation, the streets were jammed with a triple line of autos going in both directions. Despite the "share the ride" spirit, there were still many thousands who had to walk. The largest industry in the city, Eastman Kodak, did not join the general strike, since it had no unions. Mass meetings of union groups were held on Tuesday afternoon in Washington Park, and speakers criticized the city administration.⁵³ Mass picketing of all public works was, of course, in order.⁵⁴

The Settlement

The achievement of a settlement is an interesting story. When the general strike was actually beginning, Messrs. Bulen and Doyle of the State Mediation Service arrived in Rochester. At the same time Father Randall and a committee of clerical colleagues were also engaged in seeking to find a formula that would settle the dispute.⁵⁵ Late in the afternoon of Tuesday Father Randall's committee drafted a tentative settlement to be sent to President Capone of the Central Trades and Labor Council and to the City Manager. The draft included the following points:

- (1) The city to recognize the rights of D. P. W. employees

to join any union organization, or to form one.

(2) Any bona fide officers of the D. P. W. union to be accepted by the city as official spokesmen of the workers they represent.

(3) That bona fide D. P. W. union officers be granted the assistance of legal counsel when meeting or discussing with city officials.

(4) That in the present difficulty all negotiations be conducted through personal conferences between city officials and duly elected officers of the D. P. W. union.⁵⁶

This proposed settlement was signed by Father Randall and his associates and presented to Frederick Bullen, Secretary of the State Mediation Board. There followed a redraft, intended to save face as far as the city administration was concerned: "The city will be willing to confer at any time with city employees' representatives whom any group of their organized employees select to speak for them. Such representatives may be accompanied by local legal counsel."⁵⁷ Mediator Bullen took the redraft to the City Hall, and later city officials submitted their own draft of the settlement terms. The settlement as issued by Mediator Bullen had three points:

- (1) All city employees to return to work without prejudice.
- (2) All disorderly conduct charges resulting from the arrest of 267 pickets will be withdrawn.
- (3) Any city employee has the right to join any organization he pleases 'which is loyal to the United States and does not claim the right to strike against the public.'⁵⁸

The two main protagonists of the dispute had comment to make. Capone in the A. F. L. official journal stated in part: "Because Broderick and... Cartwright abolished the jobs of 489 employees; because these men refuse to recognize a legally constituted trade union; because they refuse to listen to a union spokesman; we have been forced to use our weapon of last resort, our atomic bomb. That weapon is a general strike."⁵⁹ City Manager Cartwright, on Wednesday after the general strike ended, issued a letter to all city employees. It requires some imagination to bring that letter and Mediator Bullen's agreement

into the same picture: "It is positively not necessary for you to join any organization to secure any benefits or advantages in connection with your public employment. . . . No organization has been recognized as a bargaining agent for any group of city employees."⁶⁰ The A. F. L. journal ran a two-line streamer as headline: "One-Day Strike ends as City Unions win Recognition," and added that the fruits of victory would be plucked by city workers, and they would stimulate unorganized workers in Rochester to organize.⁶¹ Business Week's article, "Open Shop Bastion Wavers," seven years after the Rochester general strike, seems to show that the spur was not as effective as Anthony Capone believed.⁶²

It is difficult to agree with the Democrat and Chronicle of May 30 that "a little more tolerant man-to-man discussion before issues were joined would have made the 'demonstration' unnecessary." In the first place, the city authorities would not consent to receive the city's top trade union leaders, even if accompanied by the Committee of the Clergy. Nor can it be said that the press encouraged tolerance of that kind. A long radio speech of high emotional character was delivered by Commissioner of Commerce MacFarlin just before the general strike, stressing the fact that sixty-one men (ash truck drivers) were endangering the health of over 300,000 people without cause; that the 489 jobs had been reestablished, a fact which, MacFarlin held, took the ground from under the sixty-one men.⁶³ The psychology of that speech showed little appreciation of the latter as human beings who wanted job security for their fellows and themselves, and doubted that job security in the light of the city's abolition and recreation of jobs.

The N. Y. Times special correspondent probably made a more objective judgment on the settlement: "The settlement, in the opinion of business men and labor leaders represents the most substantial victory labor has scored here in many years."⁶⁴ This observer points out that when the D. P. W. strike first started the administration of the city behaved in a way not seen in private industry since the Wagner Act went on the National statute book. This behavior was ultimately stopped by pressure from the Dewey administration in Albany, which had no desire to have the State Republican party tagged as a "union buster" just before a gubernatorial election.⁶⁵ The Rochester city administration, on the other hand, consistently and persistently contended that collective bargaining between a municipality and

a union was legally barred. This stand was apparently a reference to the "Little Wagner" Act (the New York State Labor Relations Act of 1937), which excluded from its provisions "employees of the State or of any political or civil subdivision or other agency thereof. . . ."66 The answer to that argument, as Warren Moscow of the N. Y. Times indicated, was that the municipality was neither required to recognize, nor barred from recognizing, a union if the municipality so desired.67

The city of Rochester, therefore, fought to the end against recognition of the A. F. L. union, but finally agreed to meet its employees or committees of them, together with local counsel if they so wished. How intensely the city management felt about this issue, after the strike was over and the men back at their jobs, can be seen in the following episodes. Commerce Commissioner MacFarlin, speaking before a state conference of mayors, asserted that the city of Rochester would not recognize the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers (Mitten's union), and would not deal with any unit of municipal workers represented by any persons other than municipal employees.68

The second incident arose out of publicity by the Labor News that under the Rochester City Manager's Charter there appeared the following paragraph: "4-5 Recognition of Unions. The City Manager and the City Council representing the administrative and legislative departments of the city government shall recognize any and all unions having affiliate members who are employees of the city of Rochester, N. Y. as the bargaining agency for their respective affiliates so employed."69 The Labor News made comment: "It is difficult to believe that the city officials are in ignorance of this provision of the Charter. It is time for the people of the City of Rochester to demand that their elected administrators comply with the law."70 The very next issue of the Labor News reported that at a special meeting of the City Council, July 10, the offensive section was repealed by a vote of six to two, and in its place was voted the following: "The city manager shall meet at convenient times with any city employee or a committee of city employees, selected by or organized or unorganized employees, who may be accompanied by legal counsel, whenever they feel aggrieved by decisions of their respective department heads relating to employment." The two adverse votes came from members of the A. F. L.71

Was the General Strike a Failure?

It may be asked, Who lost in this general strike? Was it City Manager Cartwright? Certainly he would be less able in the future to abolish five hundred city jobs at twenty-four hours' notice. Or was it Rochester labor? If we are to accept the N. Y. Times correspondent's comment from the city, the settlement represented "the most substantial victory labor has scored here in many years."

Perhaps the question should not even be raised in this fashion. Rather, the general strike in Rochester should be seen in the form of a twin social pattern, as described by the Rev. Justin Wroe Nixon.⁷² One pattern was that of frightened politicians, afraid that, with the coming of the unions, there would be lost most of the ward patronage in jobs. This first pattern also included drastic intimidation of employees by wholesale, though temporary, job abolition, together with mass arrests. This pattern had the support of a powerful industrial group, imperious to recent changes in labor regulations.

The second pattern was a growing one of resistance to reaction; a labor movement much given to democratic discussions and criticism in union meetings and union journals, but capable of surprising unity — even of A. F. L. and C. I. O. — when a real crisis faced the unions. This second pattern included inter-faith cooperation with labor in the interest of both justice and discipline. Last but not least, there was a progressive element in the business community, together with the development of a middle class that did not like to see "folks pushed around," even by the city police.

"Repeat Performance," Oakland in 1946

Oakland, California, has the record of being the only city in the United States with a double experience of the general strike. In 1934 Oakland and Alameda County constituted something of a fringe area to the larger city of San Francisco. Twenty-four hours after the strike began in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda County joined forces, and in some degree were even more energetic in strike observance, or in organizing the counter movement of citizens' committees, than San Francisco itself. Towards the close of the walkout in San Francisco the Central Labor Council and the Building Trades Council of Oakland felt that they were being treated like poor relations, in that the San Francisco Strike Committee was issuing more and more

exemptions, and ultimately calling off the strike, without showing cooperation with the Strike Committee of Oakland and Alameda County.

Despite that rather unhappy experience on the part of East Bay labor, when the time came to call a second general strike there seemed to be none of that reluctance which might have been expected. In 1934 the East Bay workers had gone on strike to enforce arbitration on the shipowners and the longshore employers, and to protest the use of the police and the National Guard in the long maritime dispute. Twelve years later East Bay labor once again called thousands of union members to the picket line. This time it was in protest against the use of Oakland city police to escort out-of-town strikebreaking trucks from nearby warehouses to two department stores in the center of the city. Once again the Central Labor Council and the Building Trades Council ignored the stringent rules and customs of the American Federation of Labor with regard to breaking contracts in order to operate a sympathy strike.

Long before and long after the short-lived explosion of the general walkout, the East Bay Labor Journal carried columns of news about the trouble between Kahn's Department Store and Hastings' men's clothing store on the one side and, on the other, Local 1265 of the A. F. L. Department Store Clerks. Recognition of the union and negotiation of a contract were the union's chief demands. The members of the union in the two stores had been on strike since late in October, 1946. Many union members in the East Bay Area felt that defeat of the Clerks' picket line would mean the resort of other businesses in town to non-union labor.⁷³ Effective support was forthcoming from the Teamsters, whose members refused to move any goods to or from the stores affected. In similar manner the Building and Construction Trades' members ceased work on the installation of escalators, the modernization and painting of the two stores.⁷⁴

On November 19, over 500 officers and the executive boards of A. F. L. affiliated unions in the area met in the Labor Temple, were briefed on the latest developments in Hastings' and Kahn's, and made plans for a mammoth mass meeting of "every A. F. L. member in the County" on Tuesday, December 3.⁷⁵ A general strike was under discussion, and labor was warned that such a strike might be decided upon at that mass meeting, in view of "hired strikebreakers" slugging girl pickets.⁷⁶

With this dry powder around, the actual spark that ignited the explosion was an action taken by the two stores on Sunday, December 1. The picket line of union members apparently had not stopped a brisk business at the two picketed stores. The trucking of new goods, however, became an urgent necessity as the inventories fell lower and lower. So the store owners quietly employed the nonunion Veterans' Truck Lines, Inc., to bring in supplies early on Sunday morning, December 1, with police protection. But the word leaked out, and on arrival the trucks met five hundred pickets. The 250 police officers cleared the area, six trucks delivered their supplies, and returned to reload.

The A. F. L. Central Labor Council, with the Building and Construction Trades Council, infuriated by the action of the police and the city authorities, called a workers' holiday for 120,000 union members, starting at five o'clock Tuesday morning. Tuesday night was the date for the mass meeting, already arranged, at which the future of the "holiday" would be decided. The second Oakland General strike was on.⁷⁷ An editorial in the East Bay Labor Journal pointed out that the A. F. L. was fighting to protest the use of police as strikebreakers and the assumption of the City Council and Chief of Police that, as sole judges of what constituted law and order, they could violate the civil liberties of the people. The police, this editorial said, armed with enough weapons to stop an invasion, had closed six highly important streets to all except scabs, police, and business "Big Shots" — all against sixty-five unarmed pickets who caused no incident or violence.⁷⁸

In reply to this organized labor viewpoint, Mayor Herbert Beach, on the radio, alleged that "the so-called 'general strike' is not a labor dispute. It is an attempt to push aside the government created by all the people. . . . No community can exist in anarchy. If one law can be broken, openly, flagrantly, repeatedly, all laws can be broken. . . the City of Oakland is not going back to the jungle."⁷⁹ Whether the Mayor was right or wrong, labor was determined to make its protest unmistakable. Not only did 142 A. F. L. unions vote for the "holiday," with more than 100,000 of their members out on the first day, but the C. I. O. made it clear that their members would not cross any A. F. L. picket line. Twenty-four hours later the Alameda County C. I. O. gave additional warning that if the city did not find a satisfactory formula concerning the use of the police

force, they would tie up all the public utilities.⁸⁰

The general strike started at five A.M. on Tuesday, December 3. At that hour the Key System of buses and trains to San Francisco ceased to run, paralyzing public transportation. Newspaper offices were picketed and closed down, unlike 1934, when the press was permitted to publish. Industrial plants shut down, and at the shipyards and dry docks workers milled around until they received union orders not to go to work. Restaurants were open for breakfast, but by eight o'clock most of them had closed as a result of visits from union members. An occasional restaurant was allowed to remain open for the exclusive service of pickets, but they had to show their union cards in order to get a meal.⁸¹

The unions had made plans for essential services. Hospitals were served, drug stores remained open, and there was milk delivery. Basic communications, power and light were not stopped. Factories, stores and bars were closed. Schools were open, but school buses were missing. Thousands of pickets swarmed around the two stores that were the original cause of the strike. Pickets showed their dislike of reporters and especially of press photographers.⁸² Wherever violence appeared to be threatened union leaders rushed to the spot with a loud speaker, borrowed from the police, and urged the strikers to behave. All through the first day heavily armed squads of police awaited a call to quell rioting, but only once were they called - to rescue a special officer who was being roughly handled. A touch of humor appeared when an army recruiting truck loudly blared its message. A laugh spread among the massed pickets when someone caught sight of a placard stuck on the back of the truck: "I am a Teamster supporting the A. F. L."

The city authorities, however, saw no humor in the situation. The Mayor's radio comments have been quoted above. The City Council gave an emergency appointment to Mr. John Hassler as City Manager, and he at once proceeded to call into session representatives of the Retail Merchants' Association and of the unions. A group of governmental and civic bodies had formed a Citizens' Strategy Committee, and it was on their urgent plea that the City Manager was appointed even sooner than had been planned.⁸³ That he did good and fast work was apparent from the comment of labor: "Mr. Hassler in 24 hours accomplished more than the whole city administration and business leaders

of the town had been able to accomplish in the five weeks of the strike; that was to get the parties together to talk the matter over. "84

Late on Wednesday afternoon an arbitration formula was announced. It had been reached after a five-hour conference between the City Manager and Commissioner Wayne Kenaston of the Federal Conciliation Service. On the same day, moreover, Dave Beck of the Seattle Teamsters, West Coast leader, brought heavy pressure to bear upon his union in Oakland, declaring that the general strike was "like revolution" and "a lot of damn foolishness with no rhyme, reason or sense." Said he: "We're determined to stop this business of penalizing employers who have contracts with us and penalizing the public. No strike sanction and no authorization of any kind was given for the general strike."85 The Teamsters were to return Thursday, whether settlement had been achieved or not, for Beck was plainly afraid of an unfavorable reaction toward his union's activities. Dan Tobin, then International President of the Teamsters, had wired his union in Oakland: "The International Brotherhood of Teamsters is bitterly opposed to any general strike for any cause.... No general strike has ever yet brought success to the labor movement...."86 According to Drew Pearson this wire was not released, by request of Dave Beck. Hence "pictures showing Dave Beck ending the strike were printed nationally." In point of fact the same group of business agents of 142 local unions that had voted for a general strike called it off as of 11 A.M. on Thursday. The press published the first newspapers for three days. Restaurants promptly reopened. Buses, trains and taxicabs began to run again, but pickets still swarmed around Kahn's and Hastings' stores, for that dispute had not been settled.87

A good deal of confusion followed the calling off of the general walkout. Two different explanations were offered:

According to union leaders, Mr. Hassler agreed that Oakland police would, in the future, not be used to 'guard professional strikebreakers' into or out of the city and that they would refrain from taking sides in all disputes between labor and management.

Mr. Hassler announced that union leaders had asked him, as City Manager, to assure them that 'the city Government in its actions and proceedings [would] follow the law of the

land if and when labor disputes exist within the city.'

This assurance, he stated, 'I unhesitatingly gave them. It is my duty and my intention to act in accordance with the law, not only in relation to labor disputes but in all other matters.'⁸⁸

It must be evident that a semantic problem could very easily arise out of such a question and answer. What, for example, was "the law of the land"? How was it construed by the Retail Merchants' Association, the City Manager, by Dave Beck, and by the Central Labor Union? In any case, for a few hours at least, "Local strike leaders interpreted the agreement between themselves and Mr. Hassler as a union victory. 'The Steering Committee recommended calling off the strike because we had accomplished its purpose, a protest against use of police in protecting strike-breakers,' said Al Brown, President of the A. F. L. Labor Council."⁸⁹

How closely the labor-management issue can be entangled with the precise interpretation of a word or phrase can be seen, humorously enough, in the following incident: On Friday afternoon, the day after the strike had been called off, the police arrested two pickets accused of violating a city ordinance banning "profane, seditious and vulgar language." The pickets were alleged to have shouted at store employees, "scabs, rats, and dirty rats."⁹⁰

The business men of Oakland seem to have been as confused on the outcome of the strike as the union leaders and ranks. Twelve hundred members of the United Employers Inc. met in the Civic Auditorium late on Thursday, hoping to have a clarification of the situation. The Counsel for the Retail Merchants' Association asserted that all they had to date was a clash of rumors on renewed strikes and picketing; that hereafter all statements purporting to deal with the strike situation would be signed by the unions and by the Retail Merchants' Association.⁹¹ James Marshall, President of Local 70 of the Teamsters, contended that the only thing which might produce another general strike would be another attempt "to bring in outside trucks with police protection."⁹²

The City Manager announced that he expected the stores to open, and that the city would give them protection. The two stores involved were uncertain, for a while, whether or not to reopen. Later Kahn's did so, but Hastings' remained closed.

Massed pickets resumed at Kahn's when a group of employees were seen making their way to the store. At this juncture the massed pickets were ordered by their leaders to go to the Labor Temple, and the flurry subsided.⁹³ The truck boycott of the two stores remained as before the general strike.⁹⁴

In this strike there did not seem to be the rush to make exemptions which one encountered in the San Francisco strike of 1934. Yet one of the reasons for calling it off was its effectiveness. Hunger played as great a part as city officials' peace overtures in ending the conflict. Strikers themselves realized that they had launched a boomerang, which cut off supplies needed by pickets as well as the community.

In the midst of the criticism that now fell heavily upon the C. L. U. and the Building Trades Council from International presidents such as Dan Tobin of the Teamsters came the statement of the U. S. News that the strikers had won their point, inasmuch as the city had agreed that the police would not again be used to break picket lines, and that city officials would remain neutral in labor disputes.⁹⁵ The labor leaders themselves and the ranks of organized labor were not too happy at the outcome, as week after week the East Bay Labor Journal indicated. The December 13 issue was filled with accusations of "double-crossing" by the city and business. "The only friend we have," said that journal, "is the massed pickets and the general strike." In January of the following year the Journal reported an article by Dan Tobin in which he wrote of the general strike in Oakland and exclaimed "What a price to pay.... Crucifying many friends to get two enemies." The Journal's terse answering comment was "Dan Tobin Reading the Wrong Newspapers."⁹⁶

Charles Real, Secretary-Treasurer of the Teamsters Local 70 and President of the State Federation of Labor, came in for much criticism in public meetings and in the Labor Journal for taking his local out of the Central Labor Union and the Building Trades Council. He was accused of doing more damage to the clerks in their campaign to gain recognition from Kahn's and Hastings' than if his local had broken through the picket line.⁹⁷

The strike dragged on, with a false alarm as to settlement, until May. Then in the same issue of the Labor Journal appeared the headline "Labor Landslide Smashes 4 Incumbents - Council to Reorganize with Possible Labor Majority," and a second, "Clerks Win Security at Kahn's and Hastings'. Seven Months Picketing Ends. Contract with 27 Stores Soon." The

same issue records the settlement terms, which included:

- (1) Picket line withdrawn. All employees to return without discrimination or loss of seniority or tenure.
- (2) Bargaining unit: All employees within the jurisdiction of A. F. L. Department and Specialty Store Employees union, Local 1265. Said union recognized as exclusive bargaining agent for all employees in the unit.
- (3) Members of the union shall maintain membership in good standing for the duration of this agreement, as a condition of continuing employment.
- (4) No interference by management of union activities provided they are conducted in lawful manner and outside working hours.
- (5) Union agents shall be allowed to visit each store, after arrangement with employer, and not in rush hours.
- (6) Bulletin boards for union notices.
- (7) Adjustment Board of three union, three management representatives, for grievance system.
- (8) One year's contract, with wage agreement retroactive to May 9, 1947. 98

What seven months of picketing by the Clerks, and two and a half days of general strike in sympathy did not accomplish, the popular vote for the City Council seems to have achieved immediately. It also indicated that enough of the voters of Oakland were still friendly to labor to give it a local election victory.

Iceland's Big Strike

The biggest strike in Iceland's history today entered its third week with ships tied up in harbor unable to load, and the airport shut to transatlantic planes.... Reykjavik has been the hardest hit. Gasoline supplies have been halted, bus services stopped and milk deliveries are being made for children and hospitals only. Delivery of foreign mail was stopped for a period, but strikers now are allowing the letters through.... Communists are wielding a strong influence in the stoppage. 99

Reykjavik is a far cry from New Orleans, San Francisco, Rochester or even Winnipeg, yet on the far fringes of the North American continent Iceland has experienced something so closely resembling a general strike as to make it worthy of record. Unlike other general strikes North of the Rio Grande in this twentieth century, Iceland's "Big Strike" was not a sympathetic walkout in the beginning. In its basic origin, however, it was just as much a planned group action as any general strike. Its basic origin was undoubtedly the rising cost of living after World War II. Although there were political undertones in the case of some of the strike leaders, as will be shown below, the majority of the ranks of organized labor were thinking rather in terms of the krona and what it would buy. Three months before the Korean War began the krona had been devalued. A 20 per cent rise in prices was expected, but in fact it approached 60 per cent. The base period for the island's cost-of-living index was 1950. By January, 1953, the index stood at 158. 100

Some Icelanders contend that it "never was a general strike," though it was "more comprehensive than any other previous strike."¹⁰¹ It is true that white collar workers did not join the walkout in any large numbers. Government workers were forbidden by law to strike, power and water supply continued, and printers and fishermen took no part. Many stores stayed open, and even by the middle of the strike teamsters and taxi drivers refused to join. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that all industry stopped; furniture, textiles, fish canning and the manufacture of electric appliances ceased production. Dairies closed and what milk supplies were obtainable on ration coupons were furnished in other stores. There were no Reykjavik buses; mail ceased for some days; all longshore work, loading and unloading, was at a standstill – thus affecting non-strikers such as fishermen – as was transatlantic airplane service. Gasoline was extremely hard to obtain. The number of unions involved slowly increased as time passed, and a few days before the settlement was reached the refrigeration engineers threatened to join the walkout. That would have been a body blow to the Icelandic economy, since quick-frozen fish is one of the island's basic exports, and millions of kronur in inventory were on hand.¹⁰²

Cost of Living Basic Cause

The Icelandic Federation of Trade Unions (Althydusamband

Islands) on August 25, 1952, wrote to all of the 170 unions in Iceland (most of which we would call "locals"), describing to them the inflation problem and what steps had been taken to meet it. It was admitted that little had been accomplished. All unions were asked to bring their contracts to an end before November 1, 1952, so that when the Annual Conference of the Federation met in November there would be no contracts blocking joint action.¹⁰³

In mid-October the Reykjavik council of unions received a communication from the Federation complaining that a very poor response had been made to their original letter. It is clear that the unions were not eager to end their contracts in the month of November, since Christmas time was a bad period in which to negotiate new contracts.¹⁰⁴

At the end of October the Communists, who were most influential in the large General Laborers' Union (Dagsbrun) saw an opportunity for action. A representative of Dagsbrun (hitherto opposed to termination of contracts) now pledged that his union would stand behind the others if they would guarantee a "united front." At the meeting on October 20 a temporary committee was established to see that the unions ended their contracts. One representative from each union that had ended, or that intended to end, its contracts constituted the committee. It was their task to decide what type of demands would be made in the negotiation of new contracts. On this temporary committee the Communists had a majority.¹⁰⁵

The President and Director of the Federation felt that the unions' demands should emphasize the lowering of prices through government intervention, taxes and import duties giving some leeway. The Communists opposed. They held that the employers should be asked for a raise in wages. If the employers needed help, let them go to the government. The government was no party to the dispute, which lay between the unions and the employers.

It was decided that labor demands should include: 15 per cent increase in basic pay;¹⁰⁶ monthly cost-of-living bonuses after this raise; three-week summer vacation with full pay; reduction of work week to forty hours without a cut in pay. A committee of four was elected to adjust the contracts of the various unions to these demands. Two of the four were Communists, the other two, Social Democrats.¹⁰⁷

To understand clearly what followed when the Big Strike

started, it is necessary to outline the role which organized labor played in the Icelandic economy and legislation.

Labor in Iceland's Economy

The island's economy depends very heavily upon foreign trade. The main exports are fish, fresh-frozen or canned. Sheep raising and hay are the chief products of the domestic economy. Though Iceland is about as large as Kentucky, but one-fifth of its total area is fit for human habitation. The rest consists of snow fields, glaciers, lava beds, mountains or deserts. A vast electric potential is contained in the streams from the glaciers, and for the capital city of Reykjavik there is unlimited heat from hot springs. Industry is slowly developing, but there is no timber, coal or clay for building or heating; all such materials must be imported.¹⁰⁸

On the whole, labor is better organized than the employers. Iceland's labor movement began with the organization of the Seaman's Union in 1894. This was followed, in 1916, by the formation of the Federation of Trade Unions, now affiliated with the non-Communist International. The Employers' Association of Iceland (Vinnuveitendafelag Islands) was not established until 1934.

World War II brought marked changes to the island economy and to Icelandic labor. In the first place the island switched from being a debtor nation to a creditor. With the coming of lend-lease citizens were able to buy far more goods from the United States than had been possible from war-wracked Britain. A second great change, leading to prosperity for much of Iceland's labor, was the presence of large numbers of the military, first British and then American, to protect the North Atlantic ship lanes from attack, should Germany attempt to capture Iceland. The military offered high wages for the many kinds of work required. Unemployment vanished from the island, and a sellers' market opened for skilled and unskilled labor. The latter began to migrate from the rural, low-wage areas, and governmental steps had to be taken to stem this migration. Subsidies to farmers were increased and also the export prices of agricultural goods; thus the farmer was enabled to raise wages.

In 1941 governmental action had caused the island's wage rates to fluctuate in proportion to the changes in the cost of living.¹⁰⁹ The base wage, however, was not determined by the

cost-of-living index. It was decided by collective bargaining, or, if government employees were concerned, by the wage rate of some previous period. Early in World War II price controls were imposed upon rents, meat, and dairy products, and by the end of 1948 all prices were frozen or else strictly controlled. Under protest from the unions, arbitration was instituted for the duration of the war in order to achieve firmer control over the base wage.

Iceland's politics revolve around some four main parties, each with its own newspaper. At the time of the Big Strike in 1952 there was in power a coalition government of the Independence Party and the Agrarian-Progressives. In philosophy they could be termed "right" and "center" respectively. The two remaining parties are the Socialists (much like the Scandinavian Social Democrats) and the Communists.¹¹⁰

Once Iceland began to industrialize, unions started to develop, mostly of the craft type, such as the printers. Several wage disputes have occurred, but not many strikes or lockouts. As early as 1915 strikes by government employees or officials were forbidden by law.¹¹¹ Ten years later a law was promulgated providing for a public mediator. Generally the latter was able to settle disputes between labor and management.

Unions have always been legal in Iceland, but as their number and power grew it became evident that a more inclusive law was necessary for the prevention of work stoppages. After its formation in 1934 the Employers' Association of Iceland sought to obtain a law governing industrial relations. A government-appointed committee examined the labor codes of neighboring lands, and in 1938 made legislative proposals which resulted in the present Act.¹¹² The Employers' Association was not represented on the committee preparing the law, and some dissatisfaction was felt over the influence which the unions were alleged to have exercised in its drafting.

The new law had a two-fold purpose: first, to determine the local position of unions and their relations with employers, especially with regard to work stoppages by strikes and lockouts; second, to determine the authority vested in the national government to intervene in labor disputes. When such disputes arose out of the interpretation of an existing contract between an employer and a union, the situation was handled in the Felagsdomur, an Industrial Tribunal or Labor Court.¹¹³ If the award in a contract interpretation given by the Felagsdomur was

ignored by one of the parties involved, then and only then could a legal work stoppage be called by the aggrieved party.

If, however, work stoppages should threaten to develop from disputes arising out of the negotiation of a new contract, concerning wages or work conditions, the government had first to seek conciliation or mediation. Should this effort fail to bring about a settlement, a work stoppage would become legal, but still under narrowly specified conditions. It would, however, under the 1938 Act, be illegal to call a work stoppage in order to bring pressure to bear upon the government in a field that was primarily political rather than economic. In the second section of this Act is a significant prohibition of the use of strikebreakers during a legal strike, and a ban on all efforts to prevent a legal stoppage by gaining the assistance of individual members of the union affected. Sympathetic work stoppages in support of a legal strike or lockout are legal if the special requirements stated below in the footnote have been complied with.¹¹⁴

The Big Strike

To return to the struggle against the rising cost of living and the Big Strike of December 1952. It has been shown that the devaluation of the krona and the rising cost of living were the basic causes of the general walkout. By the month of November some fifty-six local unions had served notice of the termination of their contracts. These had been signed in May, 1951, and were to run to the end of November, 1952. As no new agreements had been made, a majority of these unions called a strike for December, 1952.¹¹⁵ Before the strike began the Annual Conference of the National Federation of Trade Unions had met. It was said by some that the Federation lost control of the ranks at this conference. Be that as it may, it is clear that the Federation itself did not issue a strike call, either for a "Big Strike" or for a general work stoppage.¹¹⁶

The strike involved some twenty thousand workers, out of a total population of 155,000 men, women and children. The strikers were strategically placed, in both the skilled and the unskilled unions, so that in that aspect, too, the walkout bore a very close resemblance to a general strike. Reykjavik in a high degree and the outlying country to a lesser extent were seriously inconvenienced, if not paralyzed. Among the unions announcing that they would strike on December 1 were an

extraordinarily variegated collection. Dagsbrun, the General Laborers' Union, ranked first in numbers. Then followed the factory workers, blacksmiths and electricians, waitresses and auto mechanics, painters and hotel workers, bakers and shipwrights, engravers and barbers, tinsmiths and fishing net makers.¹¹⁷ As will be seen by inspection of this list, few were white collar workers. How many of these actually went on strike is not indicated. The only categories which are listed as about to strike on December 1, but quite clearly are reported as not striking, were the drivers (teamsters?) and taxi drivers. A Negotiating Committee was formed from the participating unions, and became the all-important factor in the final settlement. It was composed of five Social Democrats and four Communists, with the ambitious leader of the Social Democrats, Hannibal Valdimarsson, as one of the five. The strike had already been declared when he arrived in Reykjavik for the Parliament session. He was finally agreed upon as chairman of the Negotiating Committee, after long consultation with, and some opposition from, the representatives of the largest of the striking unions, which were dominated by the Communists. Valdimarsson was strongly backed for chairman by the executive board of the Federation, on which there were no Communists. In addition to the Negotiating Committee there was an executive committee of the strikers appointed by the largest unions on strike in Reykjavik, and on this committee the majority were Communists.¹¹⁸ These two controlling committees, jointly constituted from several of the striking unions, offer one more piece of evidence that the Big Strike was uncommonly like a general strike.

Although the walkout began on December 1, the Negotiating Committee at its own request had previously met with the Cabinet and asked for government intervention. In reply the Premier requested a postponement of the strike so that time could be obtained in which to consider what measures might be taken to ease the economic crisis. This request the Committee refused to grant, and on December 1 thirty unions ceased work, twenty of these being in Reykjavik, which was from the outset the most severely hit of all the island communities.

The unions' main demands, as stated earlier, were an increase in wages of some 15 per cent, or an equivalent increase in the buying power of the krona to be achieved through the lowering of prices.¹¹⁹ The Negotiating Committee first tackled

the employers, but after their refusal to grant the unions' demands, the Committee declared it would be ready to accept legislative or administrative measures aimed at raising the purchasing power of wages. From this point on the negotiations were largely with the government. 120

Influence of the Communists

An Icelandic citizen states that the purpose of the Big Strike was not entirely economic: "The strike represented to some extent a demonstration against the parties in power.... The leftist parties were more popular with the trade union movement, although it should be stressed that the Communist element is in a minority... except in unions like Dagsbrun." 121 Though the Communists were in a minority, they made use of the strike to stir up feelings against U.S. servicemen and policies. They alleged, for example, that the United States would use force against the strikers. In fact, no ships were unloaded, even by U.S. soldiers, and at least one ship returned to its home port without being unloaded. As mentioned above, the 1938 labor law prohibits the use of strikebreakers in a legal stoppage. This law was observed by the military.

The strike was not controlled by the Communists, but, as in so many other recent general strikes, they supported it with the aim of disrupting the national economy, 'by getting direct wage increases which would have heightened the inflation and have had disastrous effects. They did indeed want the strike prolonged, saying so openly, and to this end obtained a promise of financial support from the W. F. T. U. These facts indicate most strongly that what they desired was to weaken Iceland as a link in the Western European Defense program and that they saw the strike as a means to that end." 122 The Communists gained some strength, perhaps, from the comparative weakness of the democratic parties. The "Center" and "Right" (Agrarian-Progressives and Independence Parties) worked closely with the United States in the NATO occupation of the Reykjavik air field by American soldiers, and they rented land to the U.S. Air Force. Icelanders, who have never had a formal army and do not believe in one, now have to accept the presence of an army of foreigners. This rouses nationalist feelings on the Island, and this emotion is utilized by the Communists, who are themselves native-born. Iceland is naturally sensitive about political independence, since it came to her as

recently as 1944. Yet many an Icelander would be unemployed today but for the NATO occupational army, and this does not make for happiness.¹²³

Despite the Communists and their efforts to sow discord between Iceland and the United States, the majority of the strikers were not thinking primarily in terms of a political upheaval, but rather of the lag in wages as related to the inflationary trend in living costs. Had it been otherwise, the general election held on June 20, 1953, would have shown a loss on the part of the Coalition Government, whereas it actually made a net gain of one seat, while the Communists lost two.¹²⁴

In Iceland there are no railroads, and transportation between Reykjavik and the rest of the island depends upon long distance buses, private autos and trucks, coastwise shipping services, and airplanes. When, on the very first day of the strike, the city buses ceased to run, the strike hit hard at the popular need. A few days later services of rural bus and air lines dwindled, and private autos and trucks failed to run because no gasoline was delivered from tanks to filling stations. Doctors, police, and hospitals, together with other essential institutions, however, could receive supplies of gasoline by obtaining Strike Committee permits. As the days passed, gasoline supplies grew progressively less, until only a very few autos were seen upon the streets, and more and more people found themselves without transportation or work.

There was no regular milk delivery, but children and the sick received milk ration coupons, and enough milk was pasteurized to meet the coupons allotted, though this fact was questioned as the strike proceeded. The farmers, of course, were not on strike, but tried to distribute milk and meat in Reykjavik. The city's ordinances require that all milk be pasteurized. The pasteurization plant converted only just sufficient to meet the coupon requirements; so the pickets took the farm trucks containing surplus raw milk to the police station. This, of course, was usurpation of police functions. Furthermore, there were instances where pickets erected road-blocks to prevent the arrival of farmers' trucks in the city.¹²⁵

Unlike the citizens of many other lands when threatened by a general strike, the people of Iceland seem to have made no effort to create a Citizens' Committee to counteract the pickets. Nor, apparently, did the issuing of milk ration coupons and special gasoline permits raise the issue of taking over the

functions of government with sufficient urgency to bring such Citizens' Committees into existence.

On December 4 the Premier repeated his original request that the strike be postponed.¹²⁶ The Strike Committee had again turned to the government to obtain information as to the country's financial status and outlook, on which a solution might be achieved. The Prime Minister replied that it would not be fair to keep thousands of workers on strike while the data were being compiled. Once again the Strike Committee turned down the government's request – this time for an actual suspension of the strike. In the meantime the strike was steadily spreading. Though not all the organized workers joined it, in the end close on sixty unions were participating – nearly twice the original number.

Negotiations were meanwhile proceeding between a committee of employers, the Unions' Negotiating Committee, and the government mediator. As the days passed without settlement, the strike grew tighter. By December 10 no mail was moving in or out of Iceland. Most restaurants had closed in the early days, but there were a few incidents involving those which still remained open and were being run by the owner's family. Under common interpretation of the labor laws these families could not be held to be strikebreaking.¹²⁷

Tempers began to rise. Hannibal Valdimarsson addressed an outdoor meeting called by the Negotiating Committee, and declared that if a settlement did not come soon the strike would be tightened. The conservative daily, Morgunbladid, promptly implied that this meant such necessities as the city's power plant, the coast guard vessels, or the withdrawal of the milk ration coupons from children and the sick.¹²⁸

In answer to Valdimarsson's speech, Morgunbladid drew attention to the fact that two of the large unions – the teamsters and the taxi drivers – were still refusing to join the walkout, although the sympathy strike would have been legal.¹²⁹ The issue for December 10 reported strike pickets halting all autos entering the city from the rural areas, searching them for bootleg milk, and alleging that they had police authority so to act. The paper contended that the limited area from which the milk came for the ration coupons was only large enough to cover one-half the coupons issued.

In later issues Morgunbladid announced the threat of the refrigeration engineers,¹³⁰ and stated that forty-eight unions

were on strike at the end of the second week, and that the Communist International, the W. F. T. U., was giving funds to the strikers. The strike leaders admitted that they had sought aid from Great Britain, Scandinavia, and the United States.¹³¹ At this time the Strike Committee granted permits to citizens to obtain fuel for those homes heated by oil. While 520 bags of Christmas mail still remained untouched, transatlantic mail was resumed.¹³²

All this time efforts by the Negotiation Committee and the Mediator were continuing. By December 17 a settlement proposal was finally forthcoming, was voted upon and accepted by the union ranks, and by December 19 — one day ahead of the Refrigeration Engineers' deadline — the strike was over.

The Settlement

Einar Benediktsson has summarized the settlement as follows:

The government offered to undertake measures that would result in a drop in the cost-of-living index from 163 to 158 on January 1, 1953. There were several factors that encouraged this method. The recent removal of price control had resulted in mark-ups that were possibly unnecessarily high and certain prices could be lowered without causing hardship. A second encouraging factor for the lowering of prices was that the budget position had been relatively good over the last two years, and it seemed that an assumption of an additional burden of subsidies would be manageable and that this would not necessitate higher taxes.

The price of milk and potatoes was to be reduced quite drastically through increased subsidies. The import duties on coffee and sugar were to be removed... furthermore the Government offered to lower the price of gasoline through price control. Freight rates on imported goods were to be lowered by five per cent. It was estimated that the above measures would ensure a drop in the cost-of-living index from November to January 1st by 5.18 points.

Representatives of the various business groups, meeting with the mediation committee, voluntarily agreed to lower or fix both wholesale and retail mark-ups on certain groups of goods. The list of these goods was made public along

with the newly established mark-ups. Finally, incorporated in the Government's offer to the unions was a pledge that social security child allowances would be increased. Previously the allowance started with the fourth child, but would now start with the second.¹³³

The estimated cost to the Icelandic government of this settlement was some 21.8 m. kr., and the receipts expected in 1953 were sufficient to meet this extra cost without further taxes. In its turn Reykjavik's municipal government agreed to lift the minimum taxable income from 7,000 kr. to 15,000 kr., but real estate taxes were to be increased.

On the basis of these national and municipal offers the unions and the employers agreed to prolong their existing wage schedule with certain modifications that would bring an increase in the lowest wages of 4.3 per cent, while increases for higher wage levels would be much smaller percentage-wise. The new contracts were open to renewal in June, 1953, if thirty days' notice were given to the other party.

Concerning labor's gains, Mr. Benediktsson comments: "The benefits range... from those who gain from the drop in prices (5.1%) and the increase in vacation pay (1%) to those who also get a raise in wages (4.3%) and a raise in child allowances, which for an unskilled worker with four children may be as much as 5% of his wages. The benefits thus range from 4% to 15%."¹³⁴ About the only group that did not hail the settlement with profound relief and even satisfaction was the Communist party. Their newspaper termed the government offer "shameful," and was determined to fight against the settlement, despite the fact that the drop in the cost of living would increase a Dagsbrun worker's buying power by 1,000 kr. a year.¹³⁵

In general the strike ran through its nineteen days with very little violence, a fact which runs counter to most of the general strikes in which the Communists have had considerable influence. Morgunbladið, in editorial comment, suggested that the strike was a race between the Communists and Valdimarsson for control of power in the labor movement, and that this struggle partly explained its length. Suffice it to say that Valdimarsson was elected to the chairmanship of his party (Social Democrats) during the incidence of the "Big Strike."¹³⁶

The Iceland strike has many interesting aspects. It was the one general strike on the North American continent since the

San Francisco walkout of 1934 in which the Communists had quite considerable influence, although (as also in San Francisco) lacking power to make the final settlement. Again, it was the one general strike in the region of North America in this century where the walkout was not started as a sympathetic strike, but was from the outset a jointly planned attack upon the falling buying power of the national monetary unit. Iceland's nineteen-day strike was, moreover, the longest lasting general walkout next to Philadelphia and Winnipeg, as far as North America is concerned. So far as the writer has been able to discover, it is one of the very few general strikes in which some kind of Citizens' Committee was not formed as a protest and a protection against the power of the unions. Finally, Icelandic labor shared with labor in several other general strike areas a setback in the political field and in public relations during the subsequent general or local elections.

The strategic importance to the NATO world of cheap "heavy water" from Iceland's natural thermal resources makes her inclusion in the North American labor strike market essential. As of 1959, however, little serious change has occurred in the balance of power between the Iceland Communists and the remaining political-economic parties. Elimination of U.S. troops and air bases is the political-economic pawn. Without NATO or U.S. troops Iceland would indeed be a "sitting duck," since barely one hundred native police are on the island.¹³⁷

Chapter XII

THE POLITICAL STRIKE: I. Belgium and France 1902-1954

Belgium, Home of the Political Strike

The previous chapters have carried the tale of the economic general strike in three different areas – Sweden, Great Britain, and America. The British walkout showed the futile efforts of the Communists to control the strike, and that in San Francisco the almost successful struggle of the Communist party to capture organized labor through a general strike. The latter two conflicts indicate how difficult it is to keep a general strike strictly economic, once it has started. In both of these instances the reactionary groups in government and industry, supported by large portions of the press, played into the hands of the Communist minority, but the middle-of-the-road citizens and labor ranks refused to be stampeded, and made their influence felt before disaster resulted.

It is now time to turn to the general strike used for strictly political purposes. Once again the warning must be given that a political strike may be converted into a strike with an economic or a revolutionary purpose. Some of the examples used will illustrate this. Belgium is an outstanding country in the field of the political strike. At least four such general stoppages have occurred within its national boundaries. France and Italy might also be mentioned, in the sense that many times the Communists called strikes with the definite political motive of embarrassing the United States (UNRRA, Marshall Plan, EDC, NATO, etc.), while weakening or destroying the power of some non-Communist government in office. The Belgian strikes, however, had no Communist element in their goals, but only national political interest.

Strikes for Universal Suffrage

Belgium is a remarkable social laboratory for the study of the political general strike. The strike of 1913 was one of the most carefully planned and most completely orderly strikes, whereas in 1893 and in 1902 the strikes were accompanied or preceded by violence and death. In this last decade there have been two sizeable efforts to run a general strike for political reasons, the first to secure the abdication of King Leopold III

in favor of his son, and the second to cut down the number of months for universal military training.

The population of Belgium is composed, in about equal parts, of Walloons, who speak a Romance language much like the French, and of Flemings, whose language is closely akin to the Dutch. The Walloon territory is hilly, and given over largely to coal and iron industries. In politics the Walloons tend to be Liberals or Socialists with a strongly anticlerical viewpoint. The Flemings occupy the plain of Flanders, are engaged in intensive agriculture and craftsmanship, and are largely Catholic in religion and politics. This division of Belgium has raised hard problems for both labor and conservative leaders of the nation. During the eighties of last century various semirevolutionary strikes broke out for universal suffrage and higher wages. In these uprisings factories were burned, convents and country houses pillaged. There was little leadership of such uprisings, and they were suppressed by the military and many of their participants were killed. Later inquiry showed the presence of agents provocateurs in the more radical labor groups. Some of the dynamiting incidents were said to be the acts of government agents.

In 1893 a long and violent debate on universal suffrage at twenty-one years took place in the Belgian Parliament, but it was voted down. The General Council of the Labor party immediately sent out a call for a general strike. The storm broke. Impatient and united workers came out to the number of 200,000. There was no dynamiting this time, but the struggle was far from peaceful. Thousands marched nightly, singing revolutionary songs. Many were killed, wounded or arrested. Parliament hurriedly completed work on the Universal Suffrage bill and carried it by 110 votes to 14. The strike was called off, though labor was disturbed by the inclusion in the Act of plural voting. This extension of voting power at once gave the Labor party a footing in Parliament, with twenty-nine representatives. The plural vote, however, played into the hands of the Catholic Party (the Church being the largest property owner in the nation). By 1902, 900,000 voters with but one vote apiece were overwhelmed by 550,000 voters with 1,350,000 votes. The consequence of this was a further effort in 1902 to force from the Catholic government an unqualified universal suffrage act by the weapons of the general strike and violence.

This time the government and the middle class were ready.

In Brussels the police put a chalk mark across the shoulders of those who were found leaving the Maison du Peuple (headquarters of the local labor movement), so that they might be identified by the gendarmarie and penalized with their sabres. Many workers were killed or wounded. Many cities saw joint meetings of Socialists, Liberals, and some Christian Democrats, followers of the Abbé Daens, a Catholic radical, all favoring revision of the suffrage. As the days passed, the Marseillaise and the Carmagnole were sung in the streets as the mobs accompanied the clerical Parliamentary representatives to and from their homes. The Labor party called for a general strike on April 14. The workers, aggravated by the shooting of their colleagues, came out on strike in large numbers. To the violent riots of the preceding days there now came, in contrast, the impressive quiet of 200,000 workers waiting, silently, for the decision of Parliament.

Though large portions of the public had begun to swing to the labor viewpoint, the suffrage revision bill was defeated by 84 to 64. The General Council of the Labor party called off the strike, having made a bad error in judgment. The clerical party could not be terrified into yielding Revision. Labor was therefore faced with a general strike for which no preparation had been made. "It was," said Vandervelde, "the first great defeat of the Belgian Labor Party." 1

Preparing for the Great Strike of 1913

Belgian labor thoroughly learned the lessons of the previous general strikes. The strike of 1913, while not as complete as the British one, because none of the transport workers took part, was far more impressive than that of 1902. In 1913 the strike was prepared with great care as to resources and the preservation of order; the number of trades involved was larger, and the cooperation of the Flemish workers was marked. Strict discipline held from start to finish. While its immediate political effect was not startling, it was in no wise the defeat of 1902.

A sympathetic writer on Belgium wrote of the segregation of Catholics and Socialists: "Thus in one town there will be a Catholic, a Liberal and a Socialist trade union, a Catholic, a Liberal, and a Socialist cooperative bakery, a Catholic, a Liberal and a Socialist thrift society, each catering for similar people, but each confining its attentions to members of its own

political party. The separation extends to cafes, gymnasia, choral, temperance, and literary societies; indeed it cuts right through life."² Before the electoral campaign of 1912 there was a good deal of mutual logrolling by Liberal and Socialist candidates, with a common plank in both platforms of universal suffrage at twenty-five and abolition of the plural vote. The Walloon districts returned a large majority of Liberals and Socialists, but the rural districts continued the Catholic Party majority. The middle class, disturbed at the possibility of defeat of the government, swung to its support, to the surprise and anger of labor.

There followed a mad explosion of rage by the workers, particularly in the Walloon districts. Workers went on strike spontaneously. The Socialist leaders did not attempt to stop it immediately, but tried to play for time. The government did not hesitate to use pitiless methods of repression. The General Council of the Labor party went into the provinces to calm the people. The militants of their party brought fierce pressure to bear upon them for an instant general strike. The Council ultimately convinced the workers — for a while. When the Party Congress met it was found that 1,500 out of 1,584 delegates had been given a mandate to vote for a general strike.³

A special national committee was formed for "Universal Suffrage and the General Strike," which included the Labor party's General Council, the Trade Union Commission, the Federation of Cooperatives, and the national federation of crafts. Thus the National Committee symbolized all aspects of the labor movement. Its task was to prepare for the general strike, and to call it when the time appeared fitting. The Committee was to prepare for a six-week stoppage involving half a million workers. The changed emphasis on the strike this time was to be its peacefulness. When the House reassembled in November, Vandervelde, in the name of the Socialists, gave notice of revision of the franchise. Not until January, 1913, was the motion debated, and then the Prime Minister refused to consider the motion while under the threat of a general strike, even though it had not been called. Not until the resolution for revision had been defeated by ninety-nine votes to eighty-three did the National Committee decree a general strike, with the date fixed for April 14, leaving ample time for negotiation. What perilously approached a subsequent doublecrossing by the government led to the calling of a special congress of the Socialist

party and a determined resolve to stand by the date fixed.⁴

The structure evolved for the conduct of a long but peaceful strike consisted of four vital commissions: Propaganda, finances, food, and the evacuation of the strikers' children. The most important principle upon which the campaign was organized was centralization of propaganda, but decentralization of financial responsibility. But for this strong central control of propaganda, the "young guard" of the Socialists might easily have run away with the movement and have ended in yet another violent strike. Once the struggle started, however, the need for financial resources would be greater than any central body could meet, unless the districts had for some time raised their own local and regional funds. The idea was emphasized that the workers must not jeopardize the strike funds reserved for economic strikes. Speakers were to bring home to their audiences that without electoral justice economic justice was impossible, since all the workers' efforts for material improvement ran foul of hostile legislation. To be a success, the general strike must be both formidable and peaceful. "Formidable" implied around half a million strikers. "Peaceful" meant the avoidance of all sabotage or attacks on the liberty to work. Before Parliament met in November, literally thousands of meetings had been held, millions of leaflets had been distributed. General strike stamps, buttons and songs were commonplace.

The Propaganda Commission appealed to Catholics and rural workers, as well as to their own group of organized labor, but the fact that the "rural vote was the plural vote" told against these efforts. The country folk who worked in the cities were more affected than the farm workers, and it was through them that the Commission was able to reach even the rural spots. Attempts to convert the industrial middle class did not get very far, though a few individual employers made donations to the fund. For small retail business a good deal of the psychology of fear was used. It was hinted that, since the workers were saving for the strike, small businesses would inevitably go bankrupt in large numbers unless they threw their efforts into the persuasion of the government to yield universal suffrage without a general strike.⁵

Space forbids any detailed description of the manner in which the Propaganda Commission proceeded to rouse interest among public employees, despite grave warnings that such employees would be immediately replaced if they deserted their posts.

The hardest job before the Commission was to impress on the workers the non-violent aspect of the struggle. "A general strike of several weeks cannot remain peaceful," said one of the leaders of manual workers. Yet Vandervelde, top Socialist leader, remained convinced that such a phenomenon as a peaceful general strike was possible. He gained his assurance from the experience of the Swedish strike of 1909, forgetting that that strike was defeated. It was something smacking of genius which suggested that the younger and more militant Socialists be called upon to play the part of Labor Police, with the prime task of keeping order in the ranks.

The Commission on Finance had a huge task of raising funds for the ten months of propaganda, and for the strike period when nearly half a million strikers would have to be kept alive, only a third of whom would be members of any union. There was no plan of providing strike pay in the actual strike, but rather the feeding of the poorest by community meals for them or for their children. Further relief was planned in the scheme for sending strikers' children into the country districts or to sympathizers in other lands. These two tasks were the specific duty of the last two Commissions. They found it easier to get homes for the children than they did to persuade the parents to let the children go and thus ease the drain on the strike funds.⁶

Public Opinion

As the day of the general strike drew near,

An intense and widespread uneasiness made itself felt throughout a great portion of the population, especially in the large towns and the industrial districts. Catastrophes, violence, and terrorism were predicted by some; others were sure that the strike would be a miserable failure; all, whether openly or secretly, took elaborate precautions. There was not a middle-class housewife but laid in a stock of coal and provisions, and many supplied themselves out of all proportion to the danger. In fact there was a very extraordinary panic before the event.⁷

The Catholic press and the experience of former years gave strong reason for these fears of violence. Now that the Liberals and Socialists were working together for suffrage, people

began to whisper of civil war, even of the disloyalty of the troops. The Catholics, the Catholic unions, and the manufacturers were hostile to the general strike method, and the "yellow" (Catholic) unions did their utmost to increase their numbers. As these unions counted on some hundred thousand members, their influence was considerable.⁸

The state and the municipalities and most of the manufacturers gave warning to their employees that joining the strike would mean instant and permanent dismissal. Simultaneously there was a tremendous preparation of armed force. The soldiers were placed where there was not much expectation of trouble, and the gendarmerie in the more densely populated areas.⁹ As the fateful day approached, the press began to write of the "Strike against the State," and to predict the immediate arrest of the National Committee and the seizure of all strike funds.

In contrast to all these rumors of class struggle there was growing assurance and enthusiasm among the Socialist trade unionists. Only the leaders were anxious. In spite of all care and constant exhortation, would the ranks break out into violence? At a great demonstration in Mons the evening before the strike, Vandervelde said: "Tomorrow, by hundreds of thousands, the workers will go on strike. You know I have not desired you to do it. But since it cannot be avoided, let it be peaceful and impressive. It is not Belgium that watches you, but all of Europe."¹⁰

The Political Strike Runs Its Course

At its height the Belgian strike of 1913 claimed a "large third" of the industrial workers. The railway workers did not join the walkout, to the great disappointment of the Socialists, but the strike was sufficiently "general" to upset the national economy profoundly. From the start, order and discipline were shown to a remarkable degree. Workers left the factories in excellent order, cleaning and oiling their tools and machines so that there would be little delay when the time came to restart industry. Further, this behavior showed that the strike was not against individual employers. In Hainault, the chief industrial province, 173,000 out of 204,000 quit work. The total figures for the nation were not kept by the government, which claimed that this was a political and not an economic strike, and that therefore the strikers were not eligible for out-of-work pay. Each side suspected the other as far as data on

the numbers on strike were concerned. Vandervelde claims that at the peak some 450,000 were out. An anti-Socialist journal, *Le Correspondent*, carried a list of strikers daily, and held that not more than 300,000 were out at the peak. Professor Mahaim puts the figure at 300,000 at the outset of the strike and nearly 400,000 at the peak.¹¹

Apart from the industrial area known as the Black Country, the life of the great cities functioned as usual, and the strike was barely visible. Yet it was felt. Stores were open, taxis and tramways ran, but business was poor. Salesmen and businessmen stayed home, tourists followed their example, and the workers had nothing to spend. Shipowners and business firms diverted many ships to Rotterdam and elsewhere. At the port of Antwerp a large number of workers quit work, but their places were filled by country folk under pressure from their priests.¹² The energetic action of the five hundred labor police who patrolled the docks continuously, alert to prevent violence against the "yellow unions," probably had much to do with the fact that no disturbances occurred.¹³

Great efforts were made to stop the press, even the Socialist papers (with the exception of the official strike bulletins put out by the National Committee). The first ballot of the Typographical union was against joining the strike, but four days after the strike started the vote in favor of striking was overwhelming. When this happened, the strike bulletin had to be printed in France. Six hundred Typographical union men struck in Brussels, but, barring the Liberal and Socialist papers, most of the press got through in one way or another.¹⁴

The Great Silence

Everyone outside the Labor party expected violence. The aspect of the great strike that most impressed the public and the foreign correspondents was the profound quiet and calm discipline with which the strike ran its course. The London Times correspondent kept his daily reports harping on the amazing quiet and order of the strike. At the end he could still wire: "The Government failed to believe that their opponents could control the elements for the passive coercion with which they were threatened. These opponents have demonstrated their ability."¹⁵ True, armed forces were everywhere. The assembly of more than a few persons in front of any Catholic cooperative was forbidden. Rail stations and tracks were guarded. On

the first day of the strike soldiers were present at six in the morning at all factories and workshops. The labor police were everywhere — at fetes, conferences or factory gates. Each member of the "force" carried his identity card, to be shown whenever intervention became necessary. No parades were permitted without the express sanction of the regular trade union committee.¹⁶

The workers themselves walked around town, looked into store windows, slept late, and went to bed early. They cultivated their gardens. They visited the local *Maison du Peuple* to read the press or hear the news from the local control committees. Many visited their parents in other towns. Others took part in organized group visits to museums and galleries, or attended labor lectures. Metal workers obtained work in France and sent back part of their earnings to the strike fund. The militants occupied themselves with running the soup kitchens, acting as strike police, distributing strike cards, or aiding the Propaganda Commission.¹⁷

Victory or Defeat?

The general strike began on Monday, April 14. Two days later, Parliament reassembled and was immediately concerned wholly with the strike. A Liberal deputy moved a resolution in which the Prime Minister's promise of a Commission to consider municipal and provincial franchise was expanded to include the Parliamentary vote. This resolution was passed by unanimous vote, and an amending paragraph condemning the general strike method was carried by a three-to-one vote. The National Committee for the Suffrage and the General Strike proposed a resolution of immediate return to work, in view of the achievement of the Parliamentary debate and motion. This proposal was accepted after a long, and at times bitter, discussion.¹⁸ The Masson Resolution in the Belgian Parliament did not give complete satisfaction to the strikers. It was a partial victory, the first decisive step towards a revision of the franchise. The Liberal press claimed that the Prime Minister had yielded in the strike what he had refused to yield beforehand — the consideration by the Commission of Parliamentary suffrage as well as local and provincial. "Perhaps," wrote the London *Times* reporter, "we may concede that the strike has impressed the extreme wing of the Catholic Party, and thus at any rate... hastened the proposed inquiry into the electoral system..."¹⁹

Impartial Belgian observers could agree that the Labor party had enhanced its reputation and given evidence of a remarkable control over the working population, inasmuch as, from start to finish, the strike remained completely peaceable. Not, however, until the first World War had ended did the vote at twenty-one years, without the plural vote, actually become the law of the land. Whether it was the war or the general strike, Belgian union membership of the non-Catholic type jumped from 120,000 to 600,000 between 1913 and 1919.

What of the general strike and its future, after this Belgian experience? Professor Mahaim, not a Socialist, predicted that "the temptation to repeat this kind of experiment will be very strong." It should be no surprise, therefore, to the reader to learn that in the nineteen-fifties two more Belgian political general strikes were called, one to resist the return to Belgium of King Leopold III after World War II, and the other to set lower limits to an existing law on compulsory military service.

Leopold III, Friend of Nazis?

Intense feeling was roused in Belgium after World War II over the issue of whether the nation should take back its king, Leopold III, who had ordered the Belgians to surrender to the Nazis, and had himself been taken prisoner within eighteen days of the German attack on Belgium. The Cabinet of Hubert Pierlot, Catholic, escaped to Britain and formed a Belgium-in-exile government in London. Large numbers of workers feared Leopold's wartime friendship with Nazis. Enthusiasts of the Belgian underground looked upon Leopold as a traitor to his country and to the veterans who had in so many cases been held in prison camps (while their king was "imprisoned" in a Nazi mansion). This opposition of the non-Catholic organized workers in Belgium was in no sense hostility to a king, as was shown when Paul Spaak, one-time Socialist Premier, wrote an open letter to Leopold III, adjuring him to abdicate and let his nineteen-year-old son, Baudouin, take his place. Spaak warned Leopold that his return to Belgium would be opposed by organized labor even to the point of a general strike.²⁰

The Socialists, powerful in Brussels and Wallonia and the main industrial centers, felt that Leopold had betrayed his country by his "friendly sojourn" with notorious Nazi leaders during the Nazi occupation of Belgium. They believed him to

represent in his thought the fascist philosophy (corporatisme), and they feared that he would rule his country as a dictator. To solve the dispute the Catholic government in office resorted to a referendum on Leopold's return. Leopold had said that he would abdicate if the referendum gave him less than 55 per cent. In fact it gave him an overall vote of 57 per cent. Catholic Flanders had given him 70 per cent of the vote, but Brussels and Wallonia only 42 per cent to 48 per cent. The Socialists contended that they had not sought the referendum; that it had been the act of Leopold and the government, but that since it had been taken it was evident that Leopold could not possibly bring his nation to a sense of unity.²¹

Scathing comment on a "57 per cent king" was common in the labor press and Socialist speeches. The Belgian Federation of Labor, through its weekly organ Syndicats, declared that the return of Leopold would signify the loss of democratic liberty, and would provoke one of the worst crises through which the nation had passed. It urged the workers to vote "no," lest all their progress, gained through a half century of union struggle, be nullified by a "reactionary clique which hides behind an 'elected' king."²² On March 17, 1950, less than a week after the referendum figures were announced, some 300,000 Belgian workers walked off their jobs. These strikes were confined to anti-Leopold provinces such as Liège, Hainault, and Charleroi. In Mons the stoppage was complete in all branches of industry, including the public utilities. Strikers paraded with banners inscribed: "We'd rather starve than be ruled by a dictator." Belgium's largest iron and steel works was shut down, as also her only armaments plant. These "spontaneous" strikes were originally intended to last only twenty-four hours. In private, labor leaders admitted that the initiative had been taken by the Socialist party's Central Action Committee.²³

On March 20 the press recorded the resignation of the Cabinet. The protest strikes continued. It was made evident that they would be stepped up to the completeness of a general strike as a last resort. The Socialists emphasized that they were not cooperating with the Communists, who had taken no part. The Socialists feared "a clericalist Fascism à la Salazar under a 57 per cent King" — Salazar being Premier of Portugal.²⁴ Finally, on March 24, Belgium saw a full-fledged general strike, for twenty-four hours in industry and public utilities,

and for rail traffic while the railwaymen attended mass demonstrations in Brussels, Liège, Mons, Charleroi and La Louvière. In this strike nearly half a million workers were idle in French-speaking Wallonia, the industrial heart of the country. In Brussels the "Christian Unions" (Catholic) made possible a 10 per cent service in public transport. Even that was interfered with by University students.²⁵ It may be of interest to add that the abdication of King Leopold III did not actually take place until July, 1951, when his son Baudouin took his place.

Strike Protest Against Universal Service

A matter of grave concern to all young male Belgians was the twenty-four month universal service requirement, in order to uphold Belgian responsibilities in connection with European Defense agreements. The other five countries and Belgium were to meet in August, 1952, to decide upon a common length of service, since some were less than twenty-four months. In the meantime, demonstrations of young military trainees and young industrial workers were taking place in protest against the twenty-four month spell.²⁶

Early in August the National Committee of the Belgian Federation of Labor decreed a general strike of twenty-four hours for Saturday, August 9. For that day mass demonstrations were to be organized. The Federation of Labor pledged itself to mobilize all international union forces to achieve a common training period for all six nations involved. National defense, the Federation held, was not at issue, only the "useless, superfluous months" of training. Workers' families must "sacrifice their young men to serve the stupid policy of a supercapitalist such as Van Zeeland." At the same time the Federation took a column in its organ *Syndicats* to warn its members against attempts of the Communists to take over the general strike, prolong it and make it indefinite. Strict discipline was called for, and obedience to no other group but the Federation of Labor.²⁷

The Christian (Catholic) and Liberal trade unions denounced the strike as political in purpose. The stoppage was almost complete in metalworking plants, coal mines and other industry in Southern and Southeastern Belgium, but the railways and 95 per cent of the public services functioned as usual. Despite pouring rain, large Socialist demonstrations occurred. A week later the government announced that militiamen would be sent on

furlough after they had served twenty-one months. This brought the Belgian period of military training into line with that of the Netherlands, which had the next longest training period to Belgium's. To this extent, then, it could be said that the strike served its purpose.²⁸

The experience of Belgian labor in its efforts to wrest the universal (single) vote for all citizens from the conservative government, at the point of the general strike weapon, led naturally enough to its further use many decades later to prevent an unpopular king from becoming a dictator, and still more recently to the modification of the long twenty-four month military training stint required of all Belgian males. Only by a stretch of the meaning of the word "revolutionary" could the last three Belgian general strikes be considered anything other than political.

The Political Strike in France

Critics may contend that France should not be included in a chapter on political strikes.²⁹ The history of French labor has had one revolutionary break after another since 1789, after each of which the labor movement has had to build itself up again almost from scratch. Revolutions, "Communes," Franco-German wars, all claimed their toll of what otherwise might have been an evolutionary development of organized trade unions or labor parties. The spirit of the French workers has consequently been intensely independent, individualistic — if not anarchistically anti-government — and suspicious of centralized and powerful leadership. This has had an inevitable effect upon trade union and party organizations, weakening disastrously the French labor movement as a whole and the stability of French politics in general. Most serious of all, these breaks in continuity have laid the French labor movement wide open to Communist influence, even though that influence points unflinchingly toward a more centralized and tyrannical discipline than anything this side of the Iron Curtain, if the Communist Party is ever able to take permanent hold of the French working class.

Another ironical and seemingly illogical factor in the history of the French worker is his intense belief in, and violent debate concerning, the general strike as an effective political threat against a particular government in office, as a demonstration against war, or as a weapon to end the present system.

The irony arises in the fact that, despite the intense belief in the general strike, only once has an actual general stoppage had an unqualified success: that of 1934 against the threatening Royalist-Fascist agitation that coincided with the rise of Hitler to power in Germany. The irony deepens when one recognizes that the very effectiveness of the French general strike of February, 1934, blocked any expression of disapproval by the French Government over the tragic defeat of Austrian labor by a native fascist putsch in Vienna and the provincial cities, on that identical fatal Monday, February 12, 1934.³⁰ A general strike that really works blocks the channels of national and international communication, and this day of February 12 in France was no exception. Thus the workers of France made their point against their own fascism so well that the Austrian Social Democrats fell before the armed force of Starhemberg's Heimwehr.³¹ In France it was apparent that vast masses of workers and citizens had no use for fascism. Continuation of the existing form of government was the message of the French strike demonstration, and that was surely a political rather than a revolutionary purpose.

The use of a general strike to overthrow the existing system was debated at length over many decades by the French syndicalist workers, to such a degree, indeed, that Georges Sorel could dub that belief a "social myth." Yet, strangely enough, no actual general stoppage was produced before the coming of Kremlin Communism. Nor, without exaggeration, can one really claim that the French, Communist-incited general strikes that have become so common in the last quarter century were really expected by their authors to bring an immediate end to the system of French capitalist enterprise. Thus even these partially successful general strikes called by the (Communist) C.G.T. were really political in their essential goal — the stultification of American-aided plans for West European recovery and mutual defense.

The first World War brought an end to some decades of revolutionary syndicalism in France. This labor philosophy held that both government and employers were the natural enemies of the worker, and that the only way to end that social clash was the revolutionary general strike, which would bring all industrial power to the worker and to his union. Despite much discussion over the years as to what would be done with a general strike in the event of war, the revolutionary syndicalist

leaders of France marched to war as did the rest of patriotic Frenchmen. The government, with a long list of "radical" leaders of labor who were to be jailed at mobilization, took no such steps and did not need to. The labor leaders admitted that they would have been shot by their own labor ranks had they not responded with the rest.

A startling change took place in the C.G.T. as war progressed. The Federation and the national industrial unions took the main role in negotiations with the government, and supplied representatives of labor for a host of wartime agencies. The old syndicalist notion of "the factory to the workers" now became a formula of national ownership of industry with union representation in management. In the meantime the losses in the war were frightful. As the war stalemate continued, the old syndicalist sentiment against war and capitalism revived. The Russian Soviet revolution added fuel to the fire. Spontaneous strikes in industry occurred, and by 1919 the ranks of the metal workers repudiated their national and regional leaders, cast aside the completed contract, and shouted for the revolution. In four weeks they were back at work, without a contract and having lost all their demands.

It was in April of 1920 that the C.G.T. was appealed to for help by the railwaymen, who had walked out, demanding that their contract be observed and that the rails be nationalized. The government arrested the railwaymen's executive board, and the C.G.T. called a general strike. Three successive waves of strike by different unions were planned by the C.G.T., but the workers were quite unready and the third wave was never ordered out. The railwaymen went back a month later, utterly beaten. The strike had failed through lack of preparation by the left wing leaders who had willed it; there was dissension inside the C.G.T.; and men from the technical schools helped run the trains, while civic committees assisted in breaking the general strike. Twenty-two thousand workers were dismissed, and the membership of the C.G.T. fell from two million to six hundred thousand. The final result of this strike fiasco was the expulsion of the Communists from the C.G.T. and the formation, by those expelled, of the C.G.T.U., emphasizing the one quality, unity, which they did not possess.³¹

The C.G.T.U., the Communist party's Federation of Trade Unions, started its life with a majority of the organized workers, but fell off in membership owing to politically inspired

and hopeless strikes and the almost complete absence of freedom of thought or speech. The old C. G. T., strengthened by large numbers of civil servants (the best organized group of wage earners and the best dues-payers), soon outstripped the C. G. T. U. in numbers and influence. The next group in importance in the C. G. T. were the employees of public utilities. The one group that gained from the conflict between the C. G. T. and the C. G. T. U. was of course the employers, who now returned to prewar hostility against collective bargaining and labor contracts.

Following closely the vicissitudes of the Russian Soviet government, the French Communists reunited with the "Reformists" under the Popular Front of 1935, broke again during the Nazi-Soviet Pact, until the Nazi attack on Russia in June, 1941. Then, during the period of the Maquis or Underground, the communists were an active part of the Resistance, and took care to gain from that fact every ounce of power when the day of Liberation of France arrived. The C. G. T. purged likely opponents of Communism in high office. Then the party once again rode to power, with seats in DeGaulle's cabinet, won by tireless propaganda in the factory "cells" and Party "fractions." This separation from the Communist C. G. T. of the group that called itself Force Ouvrière (F.O.) was the sign for final recrudescence of the Communist-non-Communist split, which has remained down to the time of writing.

The Successful Strike of 1934

February 6, 1934, saw a demonstration of "the hair-trigger balance between democracy and dictatorship which exists in the modern European world. . . . That night not only was the Government of France destined to disband itself but the entire republican structure of the country was jeopardized. . . . It was not monarchism that was looking up but a deadlier kind of program leaking over the borders from Hitler Germany and Mussolini Italy."32

The long depression that had so grievously affected the United States for four years was just reaching France, and, for the first time since the first world war, unemployment of serious proportions was affecting the country. A radical government was in power, but five cabinets had come and gone in a twelvemonth. The Stavisky scandals had involved certain members of the government. The Paris "rightist" press had

aggravated the discontent by violent incitement to street parades and mob disturbances. The candidates for monarchy, however, had no personal prestige. The Croix de Feu and Les Jeunesses Patriotes, under the Pegleresque incitement of Leon Daudet in L'Action Francaise, were more likely to breed a military dictatorship and a French form of Fascism than to bring a return of the monarchy. Certainly both Germany and Italy were watching developments with lynx-eyes.³³ The latest French premier, Daladier, had just tried to meet the Stavisky scandals by dismissal of Paris' Chief of Police, Chiappe. This brought down the wrath of the rightist groups and of the war veterans, who announced a march on the Parliament buildings for Tuesday night, February 6, 1934.³⁴

The police, under a new prefect, had to defend the Parliament buildings from a multidirectional attack, in which only the war veterans' group was unarmed. The N. Y. Times correspondent contended that if the police had not held the bridge-head against the mob there would have been a repetition of the German Reichstag fire, only "this time the Deputies would have been caught inside the burning Chamber."³⁵ Said Leon Blum, Socialist leader, in Le Populaire: "The reactionaries wanted to have their day. They have had it. It was a veritable uprising, prepared and organized with care and with method by Fascist formations. It was an armed plot against the Republican regime. It failed."³⁶ As the battle raged in the streets of Paris, with the police finally forced to use their revolvers, an indescribably bitter debate took place in the Chamber. "Nobody who did not see it could believe the passion and hate which was shown between the Right and the Left." The veterans threatened to return the next day, with weapons, if the Daladier government remained in power. Hence, despite a strong Parliament vote for Daladier, the latter resigned, and an old President of the French Republic, Gaston Doumergue, took the premiership with a cabinet consisting largely of men who had served as premiers in some previous government — a "national" government.³⁸

While the Right was overwhelmingly represented in the Paris press, it did not control the country. The workers of Paris fervently believed that the revolt against the majority government in Parliament was a reactionary uprising. It was evident that any attempt to seize the premiership by a rightist politician would have led at once to worse riots and strikes. To

prevent such an occurrence the C.G.T. called a limited general strike for February 12, to last twenty-four hours, and to impress upon the fascist fringe that their efforts could not succeed.³⁹ In the meantime the Communists of the C.G.T.U., without much logic except that of making the disturbance still worse, took part in the street riots on Tuesday the sixth of February. They claimed that they had organized anti-Fascist demonstrations, but no member of the public could distinguish anti-Fascist from Fascist rioting, since both Communists and Fascists attacked the police. Then the C.G.T.U. announced a demonstration against Fascism in the streets of Paris for February 9, and got well beaten up by the police. They still criticized the C.G.T. call for a general strike on the twelfth of February, but at the last moment veered and advised the C.G.T.U. and members of the party to assist the C.G.T., on the plea that such a body could not run a successful general strike without the aid of the Communists.⁴⁰

Unlike that of the previous week, the demonstration of February 12 took place all over France as well as in Paris. P. J. Philip of the *N. Y. Times* described it: "A good many million workers throughout the country stopped work and public services were halted for periods of between one minute and twenty-four hours. There was nothing that could be called revolutionary in the movement.... It was impressive... because of the extent to which the strike order and the instructions of the leaders were obeyed.... So far as transport was concerned, the strike was triumphantly successful."⁴¹ *Le Temps* disagreed violently, arguing that it was preeminently political; this because its action was in support of a political formula basic to "the degeneration of parliamentary institutions"; because it tried to give the stoppage "the character of a political party"; because it appropriated government functions by ruling on which types of government employees would strike and which would not. For public workers to obey the Federation of Government Workers, *Le Temps* said, was Fascism — Union Fascism.⁴² The C.G.T. estimated that some 80 per cent of the nation's commercial and industrial life ceased for the twenty-four hours. The government put it at 50 per cent, the Paris police at still less. The demonstration against Fascism seems to have met with wide support by certain sections of the middle class, and by government employees even more than by factory hands. In the country generally the feeling was that the doings of

February 6 had overthrown the leftist government, which barely two years before had received a substantial majority of the citizens' votes. In the light of this fact it was the "Right" that was most generally criticized.⁴³ The strike was orderly; it ended with the twenty-fourth hour, and the Communists did not endeavor to prolong it. Its effect on foreign observers, as well as on Frenchmen, was a tacit warning that the ranks of French labor could not be as drastically liquidated as were their unhappy colleagues in Austria the same fatal week. Not until late 1939 did the Fascists come into their own in France.

The Strikes of 1936 and 1938

The vivid experience of February 6 and 12, 1934, in French political life left behind it a strong urge to all ranks of labor to combine in a "Popular Front" in politics and in economic life.⁴⁴ By spring of 1936, the Popular Front had become a fact; the elections brought a heavy increase in left wing representation, and a government of Socialists and "Radical Socialists." The Communists voted with them, but would not accept cabinet position.⁴⁵

These election returns stirred French labor to its depths. If politically it could win, why not on the economic field? The outcome was an extraordinary chain-series of strikes all over France. They started and had reached phenomenal proportions before the new (Leon Blum) government came into office; they reached their peak in the government's first month of office, and ever so slowly began to dwindle as more settlements were made daily than new strikes were organized. The Popular Front program sought the defense of liberty, the defense of peace, and the struggle against unemployment and the industrial crisis. Under the last goal came the demand for a forty-hour week without cut in pay. In addition, at the time of the sit-down strikes ("occupation strikes," "grèves sur le tas") the popular points demanded were higher wages, collective bargaining, and paid vacations.⁴⁶ The chain-series strikes of May-June, 1936, were in their way even more disturbing than a general strike. The question is still unsettled whether this series was spontaneous, rising from the ranks and strengthened by its first spectacular successes, or whether towards its peak, at any rate, it was not planned and organized by the Communist party.

It is enough for the moment to indicate that the first weeks

of the Blum Popular Front government were those in which effective legislation was passed implementing the famous Matignon Agreement, product of Blum's conference of the C. G. T. and the C. G. P. E. (General Confederation of French Production) or industrial employers. The agreement (unwillingly yielded under duress, said the employers) included the right of workers to belong to unions and to elect their delegates in the shops; collective bargaining; and paid vacations.⁴⁷ This was the French New Deal, with fragments of the NIRA, the Wagner Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act run into one agreement. A highly practical outcome of the collective bargaining contracts that followed the Matignon Agreement included wage raises of 7 per cent for the highest paid up to 15 per cent for the lowest. It is not surprising that the combined C. G. T. - C. G. T. U. was utterly swamped with new members. Within one year membership had jumped from one million to over five. Again, it is not surprising that the only organization ready with any staff of trained organizers was the Communist party, with its C. G. T. U. and its factory "cells" ready and willing to take over the power of the vastly increased unions, and to control the green members in both economic and political issues.⁴⁸

The constant price rise ate into the gains of the unions, and this fact was largely responsible for the end of the Popular Front. Management did not struggle for greater efficiency with which to absorb the added costs, but merely passed them along to the consumer. The forty-hour week was rigidly applied, and it became the plant week rather than the workers' week, thus destroying the possibility of greater production. International politics split the Socialist-Communist entente. In this general spirit of disillusion, Premier Daladier was given power to issue "decree-laws," and he immediately used that power to modify the forty-hour week. At that point the Communists persuaded the C. G. T. to threaten a twenty-four-hour general strike unless the decree-laws were revoked. The workers were completely apathetic, having expended their energy in 1936 chain-strikes, and now disillusioned even with their "success" of 1936. It became plain that a general strike would not even get to first base. But Daladier was eager for a showdown, and Jouhaux, Secretary-General of the C. G. T., was given no opportunity to save his face or that of his organization. Under the new National Service law of 1938 the rail workers who were requisitioned could not strike without penalty of dismissal.⁴⁹

Most of the workers obeyed the government orders. The fiasco of the general strike was a disaster for the C.G.T., but just what the employers had waited for – a revenge for the Matignon Agreement and the sit-down chain-strikes of 1936. Mass dismissal of government and private employees who had gone on strike was the pattern.⁵⁰

Then came the 1939 mobilization and the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and the C.G.T. was shaken to its foundations. The leading Communists were purged from the central executive bodies and, down the line, those who refused to condemn the Nazi-Soviet Pact were also expelled. The government dissolved the Communist party and banned its publications. It might well have been more effective to leave them unbanned, if only for the ranks of French labor to see by what illogical efforts they might have tried to justify their party line. With the coming of Pétain and the Vichy government the C.G.T. and its Catholic colleague, the C.F.T.C., were both dissolved, and a Labor Charter redolent of Corporatisme was promulgated.

War and Liberation

When, in June, 1941, the Nazis violated their pact with Russia and started their invasion, the Communist party men in all lands had once again to jump through the hoop. Already a banned party and in the underground as far as the French government was concerned, they joined the Resistance movement. It was the high state of organization which characterized the banned party that made it so powerful in the Resistance, and that gained it the active support of a considerable worker following. In 1943 the Communists and non-Communists once again united. Two Communists sat in the Free French cabinet of DeGaulle. In August, 1944, before the final Hitler debacle, the C.G.T. and the C.F.T.C. joined in calling a general strike in the Paris area to hasten the liberation of that city. As a result two divisions of the Allied Armies were dispatched to liberate Paris and prevent another Warsaw. As long as the Communists were part of the government (Thorez, the Communist leader, had been given amnesty by DeGaulle in 1944), they supported many government actions, sternly repressed strikes, and condemned strikers as saboteurs. At the same time intense labor by the French workers brought the national industrial production index from 21 at liberation to 90 in 1946.⁵¹ Because of their overwhelming worker background the

Communist leaders were quickly able to cash in on their underground experience. Their rigid discipline and training, together with their readiness to use fraud and force where necessary, resulted in the rapid seizure of control over the C.G.T. In 1943 the C.G.T.-C.G.T.U. reunion took place on an executive ratio of five to three (five non-Communists to three Communists); by March, 1945, the ratio of fifty-fifty was yielded by the C.G.T. One year later, at the first C.G.T. convention since the war, the voting showed a four to one ratio in favor of the Communists. The factory "cells" had given the party leaders constant contact with the workers' ranks.⁵²

The Catholic unions (C.F.T.C.) had been invited by the Communists to join, but had resolutely refused, fearing precisely what took place in the reunion of the C.G.T.-C.G.T.U. In the meantime the wage issue had been growing constantly more acute, with the cost of living rising. Strikes for wage increases rather than for political reasons now began to plague the land. At first the Communists opposed them (e.g. the strike in the Renault plants by the "independent" union), but when they persisted the party swung around to side with, and to lead, the strikers, giving as the reason for their leaving the government the plea that the Indo-Chinese war was an unjust drain on the living conditions of the French workers. When Molotov walked out from the Paris conference on the Marshall Plan in 1947, the strikes served the Communist need to destroy and weaken that plan. A series of severe stoppages occurred in November-December, 1947, and the Communists threatened a general strike (with a deadline of December 19) demanding a sliding scale for wages and a return to the government by the Communists on their own terms. This, of course, would have meant the end of the Marshall Plan and French economic recovery. At its peak this chain-strike brought out some three million workers.⁵³ The non-Communist leaders could stand it no more, and, reluctant as they were to leave the Communists in possession of the C.G.T., they split from the C.G.T. and formed the Force Ouvrière (F.O.) They endeavored to weaken the C.G.T. strikes by constantly demanding secret ballots on strikes. By mid-November, 1947, the two organizations, C.G.T. and F.O., were issuing "counter-communiqués with an atmosphere of near civil war."⁵⁴ On December 9 the Communists called off the threatened general strike. It had become evident that damage had been done to

French recovery, and that the workers were becoming more aware of the political motives behind the Communist leadership of the strikes. As this point registered with the workers the C. G. T. membership fell off seriously.

Two comments, in normally unlike journals, on Communist tactics in France at this period are remarkable for their unity of opinion. An article in the Wall Street Journal declared: "It's surprising the communist plan headed for failure so soon, because never since liberation had workers in cities more reason for revolt against their conditions of living."⁵⁵ And the Nation asserted: "The Communists have undoubtedly weakened themselves by allowing Moscow's international objectives to overshadow so obviously the immediate and desperate needs of the French workers."⁵⁶ Despite the split in the C. G. T., the steady loss of membership, and the affiliation with F. O. by the railway and communications workers who had left the C. G. T. earlier, the lesson of the French worker's hatred of being manipulated in his trade union by party politicians had not been learned by the Communists. Their main goal was to delay the economic recovery of France, and their next large-scale effort to that end was the call for a miners' strike which included the maintenance and safety men in the mines. This unheard-of action was too much even for the old-time revolutionary syndicalists, as it threatened the very source of the miner's livelihood. To the party the strike was a success, for it meant a loss of over three million tons of coal and the widening of the gap between labor and the government, which had used troops and police to break the coal strike.

The Communist pattern showed up during that mine stoppage in a limited and localized general strike at St. Etienne, in demonstration for the death of a striker at the hands of the government forces. As time and again elsewhere, the strike bred violence, a worker was shot by troops or police, and a twenty-four-hour local general strike was called in protest. At the funeral, however, eulogies of the dead man "laden with C. G. T. opinion" brought cool response from the audience.⁵⁷

The next appearance of the general strike on the French labor scene was not directly due to the Communists, but to F. O., the anti-Communist left wingers. A twenty-four-hour strike was called to achieve a raise in wages and a return to collective bargaining, which was still legally limited to non-wage issues. Force Ouvrière, moreover, was anxious to see how

effective its control was over the unions affiliated with it and with the unorganized. The Communist C.G.T. merely followed the lead of the F.O. unions. The Catholic unions, while deprecating the untimeliness of the strike, did not actively oppose it or attempt to break it. It was untimely, they held, because the government under Premier Bidault was considering such a collective bargaining law at that moment. The workers pretty generally felt that their pay had not reflected the national economic recovery of the preceding year under the influence of the Marshall Plan.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, though the strike was claimed as a victory by F.O., workers in general were apathetic because of incessant strike appeals and preferred not to risk even one day's pay by walking out. "Paris looked like a dead city.... The Metro and the regular buses halted.... Railway stations were dark and deserted. No newspapers were published.... The twenty-four hour nation-wide strike looked like a success, yet...."⁵⁹ The "yet" referred to the awkward fact that "as many Frenchmen went to work as stayed away." The Paris Herald-Tribune asserted that the ranks of Force Ouvrière had forced the hands of their leaders and caused the strike call. The C.G.T. could not afford to seem less militant than its rival, though it was plainly annoyed at the F.O. strike, alleging that the F.O. leaders would rather see all labor defeated than present a united front with C.G.T.⁶⁰ One outcome of this general strike was the passage into law, early in 1950, of the Collective Bargaining Act.⁶¹

General Strikes in the Last Decade

A recent and growing habit of the Communists in France has been to call a general work cessation (maybe for only twenty-four hours), and at the same time organize in Paris and other cities street riots on a large scale. Two such examples must suffice: the Eisenhower riot of January, 1951, and the protest against the arrival in France of General Matthew Ridgway in May of 1952. Communists have become past masters of street demonstrations. In France they have a vast publicity organization, with "eighteen daily newspapers, twenty-eight national magazines," control of the C.G.T., 14,000 functionaries drawing pay from the party or the C.G.T., and a large group of durs, or shock troops. Where dissatisfaction of the workers had a serious economic base leading to spontaneous riots in the streets, the Communist factory cells in France, up to 1948,

were strictly instructed to take over and direct such riots for aims selected by their leaders.⁶² For the Eisenhower riots the French police, Republican Security Police, Gardes Mobiles (regular soldiers), and Gendarmes (like our state troopers), with their spotter planes above and riot control cars on the ground, were able to counter the drifting of the mob. Over 3,000 Communist demonstrators spent that night in jail. The riot was a "natural" for rousing the French worker. The party claimed that the General had come to France to reconstitute the German Wehrmacht, and popular fear of rearmament of the German nation was a factor that made much public opinion favorable to the Communist demonstration.⁶³

A year later and the story was quite different. The Ridgway riot occurred the day after the signing of the European defense pact which sanctioned the raising of new German divisions. Despite the fact that this roused French fears of Germany, the Communists could not take advantage of this indignation because a few weeks earlier the Russian government had favored a new German national army. So when the Communist shock troops went into the streets this time they went alone. For some occult reason the party leader, Jacques Duclos, allowed himself to be arrested in the riot area, whereupon the party called upon the C.G.T. for an unlimited general strike. The strike closed one major plant in Paris for one day. On the second day, the Communist commandos who had terrorized the workers of F.O. (who wanted no general strike against Ridgway) "were isolated and thrown into the streets by groups organized among workers in the most solidly Communist-controlled plant in France."⁶⁴ The Communist inability to mobilize the working masses for this ultrapolitical reason became evident. In four out of six regions the rail workers, on whom the party had counted, remained at work. A party that could gain over five million votes at election time failed to bring out the organized and unorganized workers on the streets in support of a political general strike. The fact was that for political purposes strikes had lost all appeal. Furthermore, June was the beginning of the workers' paid vacation period, and many refused to jeopardize this right by a general stoppage of work. The Communists, facing this disillusion of the workers, complained that the "gross lies of the government" had given the impression that the C.G.T. had given orders for a general strike.⁶⁵

That the appeal of Communist propaganda, which had been

real and deep immediately after the liberation, was fading with the passage of time might be surmised from the events of 1953-1954. September, 1953, saw the end of a second chain-series of strikes that did not reach the completeness of a general strike, but did seriously affect all government communication services and the general public almost as grievously as if the strike call had been general. The trouble started when the right wing Laniel government sought to start its needful economies by a plan to dismiss many postoffice workers, and to postpone the retiring age of others. This plan "leaked," and in August, 1953, the Force Ouvrière in protest called out the government postal workers, and ordered a brief sympathy strike in other government services. Within two days a million government employees quit work. Workers in nationalized government coal mines, railways and other utilities also walked out. Then the Communists, who had not been consulted by F.O., ordered out the workers in the basic, privately owned, metal industry, most of whom were on vacation. When their vacation ended, some two million such workers went off the job.⁶⁶

Premier Laniel refused to yield, issued "requisition" papers for government employees ordering them back to work on pain of arrest. Soldiers and police were used to keep the necessary public services running. The C.G.T. called for ever-widening walkouts, and the workers of the C.G.T. anticipated those calls. The leaders of F.O. and the Catholic C.F.T.C. were disturbed at the spreading influence and control by the C.G.T. over the strike. Once again the political general strike was on the horizon, with the possibility of the dismissal of the Laniel government if the National Assembly were called back into session. Before this could happen, the M.R.P. (Popular Republican Movement, Catholic) brought pressure to bear from within the government, and the Morocco crisis from outside. Laniel compromised, agreed to give an unspecified bonus to the postal workers, extend job tenure coverage in the postal service, and consider a general wage increase. The C.F.T.C. and F.O. both ordered back their supporters, leaving the Communists isolated.⁶⁷ F.O. pressed for secret ballots in many private enterprises, to see if workers really wanted to stay out, and within a day or two the C.G.T. called back to work their own followers who "were joining in increasing number the non-Communists in resuming work."⁶⁸ The N. Y. Times described this

reluctant retreat of the Communists: "Eager to maintain the unity... that is its most cherished aim, the Confederation of Labor (CGT) bowed to the majority feeling and ended its opposition to the resumption of work, first among its militants in the railways, then in the Paris subways and buses. Finally it dissolved the strike committees it had formed among the Confederation members and recalcitrant non-Communist and unorganized workers in the postal services." (Italics added.) 69

This comment of the Times underlines the policy of the Communist party. Where they fail to gain a Popular Front of union and political action in the top-flight labor leadership, they proceed to achieve it at the local leadership level of the ranks. But when their own ranks in the C. G. T. began to return, the game was up, for that occasion, at any rate. 70

There was one most remarkable aspect of the political chain-strike of 1935, and of the ostensibly economic strike of the next year. Deeply and justly discontented as was the average French worker, he still did not go heart and soul after left wing leadership controlled by a foreign power. April, 1954, seemed to emphasize this fact. A general strike was called by the C. G. T. to support a demand for an increase in the national minimum from 20,000 francs (\$57) for 200 hours of work a month to 25,166 francs (\$72) for 173 hours of work per month. The Catholic C. F. T. C. had joined in the call, though severely criticized for its action. Force Ouvrière, however, had declared its hostility, and many autonomous unions had stayed at work. Not only did the Communists fail to obtain the unity of action they had long sought with other unions and the great unorganized, but they received little response from the C. G. T. members themselves. It was held by the press that the tragedy of Dien-Bien-Phu had had its effect. Even in the vast Renault plant, stronghold of the C. G. T., there were but 1,500 strikers out of the 26,000 workers. 71

The outcome of the walkout was very spotty. The garbage collectors, as usual, responded to the strike call. There was no serious stoppage in telegraph, telephone, or postal services. In some provincial cities streetcars were idle, but buses were running. Suburban rail service out of Paris ranged from 40 per cent of normal to a full 100 per cent. In Paris 80 per cent of the subway trains ran and 65 per cent of the buses, though in past strikes nearly 90 per cent of the buses had been halted. In national defense factories the strike order was not obeyed,

save in a few cities such as Lorient, Brest, and St. Etienne. The confusion in C.G.T. and party headquarters after the defeat of the strike was great. Over two million leaflets had been distributed before April 28, the date set for the strike. Scapegoats for the failure were widely sought.⁷² Perhaps the conclusion is that the French worker is at heart more patriotic than the employer group. The former is not drawn into the perpetual unrest of general and political strikes, despite the severe poverty that characterizes so much of French labor. But the employing classes seem determined to continue to challenge the gods by refusal to modernize their relations with their employees. A decade of real collective bargaining might show another picture, but real collective bargaining is not what the party leaders of C.G.T. intend or desire.

Chapter XIII

THE POLITICAL STRIKE: II. From the Kapp-Putsch to 1959*

There are not many nations which, like Belgium, offer a long history of the general strike used for political purposes. In most instances the strike aims involved have been complex. This is particularly true of France and Italy, where the Communist leaders have always been interested in the ultimate, revolutionary fate of the nation involved in what its workers held to be strictly political strikes. This was true of France's successful general strike of February 12, 1934. It was equally true of the Kapp-Putsch in Germany in 1920. In both instances the strike was called by the more conservative groups of labor, such as the trade unions in Germany, or the Socialists in France. The Communists took active part in both cases, but they were not the group responsible for calling the general strike, though their claims would make one think they were the initiators.

The Kapp-Putsch

Critics may say that the general strike which defeated the reactionary effort to recapture the German government in 1920 was a counter-revolutionary rather than a political strike. The writer merely points out that the mass of the strikers did not desire their Social Democrat government overthrown by the Kapp-Putsch, and they fought to save it with this labor weapon. With this as their aim it was a political, rather than an economic or a revolutionary strike. This is clear, inasmuch as more than one general strike had been attempted in Germany between 1918 and 1920, to bring into power a left-wing government, by pro-Soviet leaders such as Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and the Spartacists. In each case the effort had been prevented or defeated. The Spartacist strikes were revolutionary, whereas the strike against Kapp and his Baltic Brigades was primarily political.

The German reactionaries in politics and military life had

*In certain parts of this chapter the author has again drawn heavily upon his book, The General Strike, published in 1931, which is now out of print.

learned little from World War I or the subsequent revolution. Their contempt for the German working class made it easy for them to look upon the workers and their Social Democratic party, signatories to the hated peace treaty, as traitors to Germany. Discredited military leaders such as Ludendorff had escaped any penalty for their deeds. Such men were kept in the background, and a fanatical patriot, Wolfgang Kapp, born in New York State from German republican stock, was used as the immediate titular leader. The senior acting military member of the group was General von Lüttwitz, who had helped suppress the Spartacists in 1918-1919.

The spark that set off the military explosion was the Allies' order that the Baltic troops should be disbanded. These were units formed of the "toughest fighting material brought by severity to a high pitch of internal discipline, but with habits of the most truculent militarism towards the public, acquired in their Baltic, Silesian, and anti-Bolshevist campaigns."¹ These "Baltic" Brigades were in camp within easy march of Berlin. On March 10, 1920, General von Lüttwitz visited President Ebert to present a virtual ultimatum with regard to the German military program. For one thing, the General was emphatic that there should be no disbanding and no diminution of officers' salaries or privileges. He demanded new elections for the Reichstag, a plebiscite for election of the President, and a Cabinet of experts. Gustav Noske, who had quelled the "revolution" in the German naval bases at the end of World War I, warned von Lüttwitz that, if orders of the government were disobeyed and military force were used against the Republic, the government would declare a general strike. This had little effect on the General, and he was shortly afterward removed from his office as head of the Berlin Reichswehr.²

In the meantime a warrant was out for the arrest of Dr. Kapp and his chief associates, but the police force was so riddled with Kappists that the execution of these warrants met with all kinds of interference. Friday, March 12, saw the Baltic Brigades start their march on Berlin. The Ebert government, learning that the Berlin Reichswehr was on Kapp's side, made a rapid move to Dresden and then to Stuttgart, where it issued an emergency call for an immediate meeting of the National Assembly. At the same time a call went out for a general strike throughout Germany against the Kapp rebels. The proclamation declared: "There is but one means to prevent the

return of Wilhelm II; the paralysis of all economic life. Not a hand must stir, not a worker give aid to the military dictatorship. General Strike all along the line."³ Two facts show the concern which the people of Germany felt for the continuance of their existing government. The first was the amazing unity of support given the strike by non-Socialist parties of the Center and the "Democrats." This meant that the Catholic trade unions of the Rhineland and the so-called "yellow" unions of the "Democrats" were, for once, united in purpose with the two Socialist parties. The Communists acted with the others, but their purpose was questionable.⁴ The second most significant fact was the surprising act of Carl Legien, head of the German Federation of Labor, famous for his earlier condemnation of the general strike weapon as "General strike, general nonsense." He appeared to recognize in this present crisis that all labor organization was at stake, and so issued a call for a general strike from the side of the trade unions. Unlike the government, Legien remained in Berlin, went underground, and from his hiding place directed the struggle. When the strike ended in Kapp's defeat, it was Legien as much as any who demanded punishment of the "Rebels."⁵ Ruth Fischer outlined the crisis:

This was perhaps the most complete political general strike in a modern industrial country. German economy was brought to a standstill. From one hour to the next no train ran, there was no gas, no electricity, only a limited water supply. The rebels had excellent artillery and machine guns, airplanes, well-trained and reliable troops, a well-conceived strategic plan for the conquest of Germany. But against the power of organized labor they were paralyzed; no army can function in a vacuum.⁶

Even before the official strike call had reached the workers, thousands had spontaneously ceased work. By Sunday, March 14, the general walkout was in full swing. Only the telephones remained in service. The attempt to overawe the working population by an overwhelming display of military might failed dismally. A split in the temporary Kapp cabinet on whether to negotiate with the workers' committees or to shoot the ring-leaders was decided in favor of the latter. Clashes took place between the Technical Emergency Corps and the working

population as the former went to and from their work in the water and light plants. The military were stoned in many districts, and replied with rifle fire, killing many.⁷

Kapp now sought a compromise with Ebert, including a common denunciation of the devastating general strike. Luckily for the German workers, Ebert was adamant in refusing even to consider such a compromise. In districts where there were no military forces Communists had already set up local "soviets." The food supply was hourly more precarious. On Wednesday, March 17, Wolfgang Kapp resigned and ignominiously fled to Sweden. Von Lüttwitz clung to his post. Kapp gave as his reason for flight the need for absolute union of all Germans against the "annihilating danger of Bolshevism."⁸ Tension grew as rebel troops remained in command of Berlin and the strike was in no wise abated. Finally the Kapp government surrendered. Von Seeckt took over the Reichswehr and ordered the Baltic Brigades to withdraw immediately from Berlin. As they marched sullenly out they were treated to shrill and contemptuous whistles of the striking workers. Acting under orders, the rear guard opened fire at point-blank range, killing several workers.

The brunt of the strike fell on the workers. Casualties were almost as severe as in a battle; privation was great to all. When the Kappists surrendered there were barely four days' supplies of food left in Berlin. Vice Chancellor Schiffer, who had been left behind by Ebert as a kind of liaison Minister, had announced the surrender of the Kappists, and at the same time, on March 18, had called upon the German people to resume work. With the Kapp-Putsch defeated, at least for the moment, the workers who had borne the burden of the conflict rather naturally refused to return to work until the Ebert government had given them more definite evidence of its attitude towards the reactionary section of the nation. On Saturday, March 20, Legien announced that an agreement had been reached with the Ebert government that would permit the workers to call off the strike.⁹ Dissatisfaction followed the publication of the settlement, and chaos reigned on the following Monday. Services were disorganized; the food supply was low; queues forming outside the bakers' and butchers' shops augured food riots.

The strike was finally and definitely called off on Monday at midnight, when the industrial councils and the shop stewards joined with the trade unions in an agreement with the

government. A further statement to this effect was issued by Legien, on the condition that if the government failed to keep its pledges the general strike would be resumed. A supplementary agreement included withdrawal of the troops, an end to the state of seige, a pledge that armed workers would not be attacked, and that negotiations would ensue to get workers incorporated in the *Sicherheitswehr* of Prussia.

In fact, the end was tragic. Where workers had retired from their strongholds as soon as the agreements with the Ebert government had been reached, the government troops' officers instituted a house-to-house search for arms, removed the workers' leaders, and in certain cases executed them after summary court-martial. The government granted to von Seeckt unlimited power to use the military court throughout the country. Yet when Kapp was in power Major-General von Seeckt had made no move to go to the aid of the Ebert government. "The striking workers and those who had risen in armed resistance had at a stroke become 'Spartacists' and 'Communists' who were striving for a Bolshevik dictatorship and therefore had to be crushed with a most brutal disregard."¹⁰ In brief, the punishment of the Kappists became a farce. The Baltic Brigades were untouched. The penalty paid by the unhappy strikers who caused the failure of the Kapp-Putsch was bitter and unforgettable. It is a dangerous game for the workers to try to save their government by the general strike weapon, even if it succeeds.

Vienna in 1927

Vienna in 1927 witnessed a general strike called for the purpose, openly stated at the time, of preventing a wild protest riot from ending in civil war and revolution. To those who knew Vienna only before World War I the events of the bloody fifteenth of July, 1927, are not easy of interpretation. For an understanding of that wild and tragic day the contrast between the old, prewar Austria and that of 1927 must be outlined. The city of Vienna was once a political and cultural center of an empire of fifty million souls. With the signing of the peace treaty after World War I it became a city-state with little hinterland, struggling for economic and political existence against surrounding territories whose rampant nationalism erected almost insuperable tariff barriers. All that was left of Austria was compelled to import across those unfriendly borders many

necessary raw materials, while remaining almost completely bereft of a friendly market for its exports. The resulting partial industrial paralysis produced gravest problems of unemployment and financial disorganization. Austria, therefore, had to live quite largely upon its invisible exports — the services and satisfactions rendered to the flood of tourists who sought that beautiful mountain republic.¹¹

In 1927, moreover, Vienna had become the stronghold of one of the most powerful Socialist parties in the world, in proportion to the size of its nation. In a population of but six and one-half millions, the Socialist party of Austria polled over a million and a half votes, or 43 per cent of the total national electorate. In the city of Vienna itself, wherein was found more than a third of the population, they possessed 62 per cent of the vote, or close to 700,000 votes. Many very important social reforms had been accomplished by the Socialist Municipal Government. In the five years ending 1927 they had built 25,000 workers' homes. The child welfare work of Vienna was not excelled in Europe, infant mortality having been brought down from 16 per cent (before the war) to 8 per cent. The taxation system had been reorganized in such manner that some 800 were paying a combined annual tax equal to that paid by the other 490,000 taxpaying citizens. Such heavy taxation was not enjoyed by the eight hundred, but it resulted in the "healthy faces and sturdy figures of the mass of the population, and the disappearance of that terrible hunger which stalked through the streets and rendered ghastly the faces of men and women who had passed through the famine days of the war."¹² Communists have been relatively few in Austria as a result of the Socialists' policy of throwing open their ranks to radicals of every shade of redness, but once enrolled, keeping them within the bounds of decent behavior by giving them free opportunity to blow off steam under the limitations of party discipline. By adopting this policy after World War I the Socialists saved Austria from the fate of Hungary before the menace of Bolshevism.¹³

Vienna was not merely the capital city of the Austrian Federal Republic, but was itself by far the most powerful of the constituent federal states of that Republic. The situation, therefore, was a difficult one for statesmen when, as in 1927, the national government and the government of the city-state of Vienna were not of the same party or persuasion. In 1927 the

national government of Chancellor Seipel had a majority of twenty-three seats over the Socialist opposition, mainly because of support in the country districts. His government was a coalition of Pan-Germans and "Christian-Socialists," of which party the Chancellor himself was a member. The government program had been repeatedly thwarted by the Socialists, who had blocked many bills in committee and had often demanded the resignation of the Seipel government. One result of such opposition had been a swing toward Fascism by many political leaders. Militaristic organizations of the Fascist variety, such as the so-called "Front-fighters" and the Heimwehr, had caused much trouble, and the Socialists had formed the Schutzbund, or Republican Defense, as a counter-irritant.¹⁴

The immediate cause of the uprising and the subsequent general strike was a verdict delivered in the case of three members of the "Front-fighters." On the same day in January, 1927, the "Front-fighters" and the Socialist Republican Defense Corps had held demonstrations in the same Burgenland village of Schattendorf. As a result of the friction that followed, a worker and an eight-year-old boy were shot and killed by Fascist fanatics. Three men were held for trial. The evidence was so confused that the Court was unable to form a clear conclusion as to which side started the trouble, but legally there was no question as to which persons fired the fatal shots. Nevertheless, the three "Front-fighters" were acquitted.¹⁵

The news of this acquittal reached the mass of Vienna workers on Friday morning, July 15. The Vienna Arbeiter-Zeitung, organ of the Austrian Social Democrats, published a fiery protest, termed the "perjured jurymen" "dishonorable lawbreakers," and suggested that influence was used to make the jury feel the "Front-fighters" were doing a good deed in shooting Socialists. The editors continued:

When workers have to recognize that there is no justice for them in the capitalistic order, that justice degenerates into comedy whenever the question arises of avenging a worker's death, then their belief in justice will be destroyed, and the failure of justice is the worst thing that can happen to a worker. When once they recognize this, and their mind is dominated by this depressing fact, then there is an end to any order. The bourgeois world always warns us against civil war, but is not this smooth, this

tantalizing release of men who have killed workers, just because it is workers whom they have killed, already civil war? We warn them all, from a sowing of wrong such as occurred yesterday, only grave misfortune can possibly grow. 16

The events that followed the publication of the verdict to the general public on Friday morning beggar description, and are extremely difficult to disentangle.

Much of the European press and some of the American papers alleged a Communist plot as the origin of the riot and bloodshed. There is evidence that some Communists were present in Vienna, and that they made use of this opportunity to inflame popular feeling. It is more probable that the affair was the combined outcome of enraged workers and the unwise actions of the police early on Friday morning. What is clear is that Vienna workers in a hundred different spots throughout the city, on learning the news of the acquittal, immediately ceased work, held countless meetings, with the same decision in each case - "On to Parliament!" During the night the power station workers had decided to give a demonstration strike, and from eight to nine on Friday morning the trolleys did not run. The workers, bent for Parliament and the center of the city, poured in on foot and by auto truck. 17

In the meantime the government had ordered out the mounted police, not seen in Vienna street demonstrations for many years. The first group of demonstrators to appear in the Ringstrasse were municipal employees, not Communists. Addressed by the head of their organization on the Schattendorf murder case, these municipal employees decided to march across the Ringstrasse to the Parliament House. At the police cordon, Reismann, the leader of the municipal workers, asked the police to allow his orderly procession to pass through, and this was granted. Suddenly an attack was made from the direction of Parliament House by the mounted gendarmes, who charged across the street, blocked the way, and rode upon the crowd. Further consultation with the police officials followed, and the order to withdraw was given to the police. Then suddenly, so the report runs, the police lost their heads, pushed forward again, and were in turn attacked by the angry crowd with stones and planks. 18

"The police started the whole trouble without need," declared

a state employee, who had watched the events from the Parliament House, to a couple of Socialist Members of Parliament. A blow with a sabre on a worker, and the subsequent arrest of the worker by foot police, was first cause of the trouble. Mounted police then pursued the assembled workers with drawn sabres, and a wild sauve qui peut followed. Mad with indignation, the workers endeavored to reassemble in many places, and to arm themselves in some fashion. A house was being repaired nearby, and the loose planks were seized upon as weapons. A Social-Democrat leader tried vainly to stem the tide of popular wrath, but only the instant withdrawal of all the offending police could have helped the situation at that point. Chief of Police Schober's order to the police to cease their attack was useless, as the men continued and roused the workers to fever heat. The first wounded were carried into the Parliament House, and the police cleared the space at any cost.¹⁹

The mob hastily constructed barricades of building materials, park benches, ladders and planking. Street repairs gave ample supply of missiles of granite setts. These were answered by police revolvers. An attack now followed upon a police station by the assembled mob of angered workers, of Communists, and of the less responsible elements of the city streets, caused apparently by the police firing upon the crowd from the windows. The mob tried to lynch a police inspector, but were prevented by the Schutzbund, or Republican Guard, who made heroic efforts to keep the demonstration within peaceful bounds, but were faced on one side by a maddened mob and on the other by the equally insensate police. "Uniforms were ripped from the police by the rioters and strung up on lampposts," where they hung as "scarecrow effigies. The police efforts to quell the trouble continued, but without avail. Reinforcements coming in the motor 'Black Marias' were taken from the cars and beaten by the crowd. Meanwhile, the mob penetrated the Ministry of Justice and began hurling documents, judges' robes and caps into the street, where bonfires were immediately made."²⁰ The fire spread through the broken windows to the building itself, or, as other reports have it, was actually set by Communists. The fire brigade failed to get near to the burning building, in spite of efforts made by Dr. Julius Deutsch, former Socialist Minister of Defense, and Mayor Karl Seitz — at the risk of their lives — to persuade the mob to give way.²¹

With the arrival of the Militia the streets became a positive

battlefield, and the police, now armed with rifles and expanding bullets, made frightful havoc of the crowds, who neither gave nor received mercy. The mob also attacked and partially destroyed the offices of the "bourgeois" newspapers, the Reichspost, the Neue Wiener Nachrichten, and the Deutsch-Osterreichische Tages Zeitung, crying out, in the words of the Reichspost's own editorial on the acquittal, "A Clear Judgment, A Clear Judgment!" In the meantime the acquitted trio, the cause of all this riot, escaped across the frontier only a few moments before their Socialist pursuers arrived at the house where they had lodged, and destroyed it.²²

At seven o'clock in the evening of the bloody Friday, word passed around that a general strike was to be decreed. Post, telegraph, and radio services ceased. In the first special bulletin issued by the Social Democrats on Saturday, July 16, it was argued that it was better to use economic means of battle, especially all means of transport and communication. Hence the Social Democratic party Executive and the Trade Union Council jointly issued the following order:

1. Railroad, postal, telegraph and telephone services to cease all over Austria and resume only upon definite orders, food trains alone exempted.

2. For twenty-four hours (i.e. Saturday) all workers and employees in Vienna to lay down tools as a protest. At close of the twenty-four hour period all to resume work, save those employed in communication and transport. The only exceptions to this one day general strike...workers in hospitals and health institutions, water works, bakeries, gas and electric plants, and occupations that cannot cease without danger. The street car men to strike for twenty-four hours and then resume, but be held in reserve for further strike if necessary.

3. In all quarters of Vienna the Republican Schutzbund is to be on permanent duty.

4. All other comrades must neither go to the Ringstrasse nor start any kind of demonstration. Every attempt at a demonstration will call forth fresh bloodshed, which we desire to avoid. Any large demonstration of the unorganized masses weakens the effectiveness of the Republican Schutzbund. The Government has gathered forces of militia and police, and we desire no clashes that would

accrue to the credit of the Government.

Therefore: No demonstrations today! Silent, dignified, complete protest strike. Meanwhile the unlimited strike of the post, telegraph, and telephone services has begun and will have greater effect than the largest street demonstration.

Our future behavior depends upon the action of the Government and Parliament, whose immediate convocation we demand.²³

A later edition of the strike bulletin, published by the Social Democrats on Saturday, reported on the progress of the walk-out and warned the workers against the arguments of the Communists:

The orders of the Party Executive and the Trades Union Council have done their work. Rail traffic has stopped since midnight in all Austria. The postal, telephone and telegraph strike has carried on throughout Austria. The protest-strike of the working class has been put through with strength and dignity. The Schutzbund is in readiness in all Austria. We ask you comrades, to preserve full discipline and to permit yourselves to be diverted from our orders by no kind of provocation!

Do not allow yourselves to be misled by the Communists!

The Communists are agitating for the instant arming of the working class. Against whom we have to declare: The arming of the working class at the present moment would mean immediate civil war, as a result of the armed struggle between the working class and the military formations of the state. Civil war would mean (1) fresh horrible sacrifice of life; (2) the most terrible economic catastrophe, famine and the increase of unemployment; (3) the ruin of the working class in the agricultural districts, and the great strengthening of armed Fascism in these districts; (4) the gravest danger for the existence of the Republic.

We do not want to experience what the working class of Italy and Hungary have endured. We desire, therefore, to make all efforts to avoid civil war. We beg all comrades to resist all Communist provocateurs and to hold firmly to the orders of the Party and the Trade Unions.²⁴

That the Communists gave the orthodox Social Democrat leaders much apprehension is evident from the above warning. But for a disturbance in one of the suburbs of Vienna, Saturday would have passed in complete quiet. As it was, in this instance "Communist youth and city rabble" gave an opportunity to the guard for further shooting, causing six more deaths. According to the strike bulletin, "the Communists not only thoughtlessly forced out the guard, but also fell upon a section of the Republican Schutzbund, outrageously attacking class comrades."25

As the hours passed, the stories of the plots of the Communists grew, and eyewitnesses testified that the trouble before the Palace of Justice on Friday was caused by a band of Communists led by Herr Fiala; that this comparatively small band of "Reds" pushed through the thousands of assembled Socialists and began firing upon the police. The presence and activity of the Communists is said to have come as a complete surprise to the Social Democrat leaders of Vienna, who were anything but "Red" extremists.²⁶ Chancellor Seipel himself, in the special session of Parliament which met July 26, stated that "the Communists took advantage of the tumult for their own ends, but did not instigate it."²⁷ (Italics added.)

A more serious problem than the Communists, however, faced the Social Democrat leaders of Vienna on the Sunday and Monday after the one-day general strike had ended. The "communication strike" was still in force, and while the leaders could not call that off too soon after the wild riots of Friday had subsided, for fear of their own rank and file, there threatened a still graver danger to the whole Socialist movement. Word came through from one provincial town after another that the Fascist forces were gathering for an attack upon Vienna in case the Seipel Ministry were forcibly superseded by the Socialists, or if the latter persisted in retaining the "communications strike" indefinitely. In the Tyrol and the Vorarlberg the Heimwehr were even attempting to run trains and so transport their forces to Vienna. At Graz, the capital of Styria, seat of the University and center of provincial Socialism, there had been a threat from the Heimwehr, several hundred strong in the surrounding rural districts, of an invasion of that city. Socialist leaders in Graz, therefore, "sent a most urgent request to Vienna to end the strike, owing to their fear that a state of civil war in Graz was imminent."²⁸

The government of Chancellor Seipel, recognizing the difficult position of the Socialists, merely sat back quietly, waited for time to crystallize events in the government's favor, and in the meantime made arrangements for the shipment of "loyal" provincial troops by river to Vienna.²⁹ With such knowledge to fortify them against the possible wrath of their partisans, the Social Democrat leaders of Vienna decided, on Sunday noon, to call off the "communications strike" unconditionally on Monday midnight, July 18, and to fight out the question of responsibility in Parliament.

A violent debate followed in the House in the ensuing week; the "lie" was passed between Chancellor Seipel and Burgomaster Seitz; but the strike was over, a hundred dead had been buried, and a property loss had been incurred by the city of some thirty-five million dollars.³⁰ And the little mountain republic of Austria remained in just as difficult and unenviable a situation, between its hostile and nationalistic neighbors with their high tariffs, as before any Schattendorf case had caused blood to run in the Vienna streets and class feeling to flare up by the fires of the burning Palace of Justice.

Chancellor Seipel was not in as strong a position as he and his partisans had expected. The reaction against the Socialists was but temporary. Thirty of the "criminals of July" were brought to trial before the juries of Vienna, and without exception every one was acquitted. The juries expressed the view that the excesses which in ordinary circumstances would unquestionably have merited severe punishment had to be regarded as an aspect of a mass state of mind. The Vienna juries perceived that after the acquittal of the three Fascists of the Schattendorf shooting incident it would be rather an aggravation of the injustice to punish for slighter offenses of rioting. In various elections held in the early months of 1928 the Socialists showed gains both in votes and in representation in many provincial municipalities, although the campaign against the Socialist ticket had been most energetic.³¹

Vienna in 1934

The good and the bad deeds of the Social Democratic party in Austria were both held against them. The memory of Vienna in 1927 was not quickly forgotten by the rural and Catholic vote. The continued resistance of the Socialists against growing Fascist feeling showed itself in their unwillingness to allow

Chancellor Dollfuss in 1933 to rule without Parliament unless a maximum period of two years was involved, and unless at the same time a small representative Parliamentary Committee was consulted. From the day when the German Reichstag elections gave Hitler the power he wanted, March 5, 1933, immense pressure was brought to bear upon the Chancellor by Prince von Starhemberg's Heimwehr, and by such right-wing leaders as the Bishop of Linz and the Papal Nuncio, who held that the time was ripe "to destroy Socialism forever."³²

In October, 1933, the Socialist party announced in the Parliamentary Committee mentioned above that it would have recourse to the general strike only if (1) the Government imposed a Fascist Constitution upon the country; (2) a Government Commissar were appointed in Vienna; (3) the Social Democratic party of the Trade unions were dissolved. Dollfuss had promised a new constitution and a "Corporate State" in the preceding month. He had also dissolved the Republican Schutzbund and from then on relied upon the regular army and the Fascist Heimwehr. Vice-Chancellor Fey of Austria, already a Heimwehr leader, received from Dollfuss in January, 1934, the supreme command over the entire police and gendarmerie of Austria. In the same month Italian Under Secretary Suvich visited Vienna, giving rise to subsequent rumors that Mussolini demanded the end of the Socialists in Austria as a price for his support against Nazi Germany.

In February, 1934, signs of what was brewing became more evident. The Chancellor was absent for a few days in Hungary, and during his absence Vice-Chancellor Fey was in control. On Thursday, February 8, a series of raids by the Heimwehr was made upon Socialist centers, ending with the occupation of the Arbeiter Zeitung offices. It was then claimed that the raiders had found "an unprecedented criminal plot of Bolshevik and Marxist elements" and enough bombs to blow up Vienna.³³ At the same time the revolt of the Tyrol Heimwehr spread to Upper Austria and the armed Heimwehr occupied the city of Linz. That is where the trouble started. The Heimwehr and the police raided the Socialist headquarters and were met with armed resistance. The Linz Socialists then called a general strike. When the Vienna trade union leaders heard the news, they held a hurried meeting and decided that the moment had come to make a last stand against the Fascist attack by a general strike throughout Austria.³⁴

Late Monday evening Dollfuss' Cabinet held an emergency meeting, and declared the Social Democrat party banned throughout Austria. The Diet was dissolved, and Karl Seitz, head of the banned party and Mayor of Vienna, was dismissed from his post and arrested. The only leaders not arrested were those who had sought hiding in order to organize the strike and resistance.³⁵ Two of Dollfuss' own party leaders besought him to dismiss Fey, who, they declared, was responsible for the outbreak of violence. Needless to add, Dollfuss took no such action, for he was prepared even to sacrifice his own Christian Socialist party to the demands of the Austrian Fascists.³⁶ A week before the Vienna outbreak Heimwehr committees had appeared before the provincial Governors, demanding the immediate establishment of Fascism and the destruction of all political parties, even Dollfuss' Christian Socialists. By his action in giving Fey power and not removing him Dollfuss made his own party next in line for dissolution.³⁷ Prince Starhemberg, national leader of the Heimwehr, stated that his aim was "once and for all to put an end to democracy under all its forms."³⁸

Frederick Birchall of the N. Y. Times wrote a vivid tale of the resistance: "During the night [Monday] the rebels rallied under the attacks made upon them. . . they fought back with a few rifles and machine guns against the steel-helmeted Heimwehr and the police and the regular Austrian troops equipped with howitzers and mine-throwers, tear-gas bombs and other paraphernalia."³⁹ While the government organ bore the great headline "Successful Overthrow of Socialist Revolt," Birchall contends that:

There had been no revolt until the Socialist workers sprang to resist the raiding of the dwellings. They have used in that resistance the pitiable remnants of arms assembled eight years ago to resist a Heimwehr putsch, and concealed against successive government searches until now, when Vice-Chancellor Fey's speech to the Heimwehr gave them notice that the last chance to make a stand for themselves had come. Why the Socialists were made the objects of this attack is still a mystery, because the futile call for a general strike came only after resistance to the search for arms at Linz had resulted in bloodshed and similar searches were being initiated in Vienna.⁴⁰

While the government proclaimed that any worker joining the general strike would be dealt with ruthlessly, the Republican

Defense Corps (Schutzbund) issued a secret order by leaflet, calling on all its members to fight to the last man in defense of working class democracy against Fascism.⁴¹ The workers' housing in various parts of Vienna was the target of the heavy artillery attacks, and rapidly became a wrecked monument to the Social Democrats' housing skill. This was the price of the "successful overthrow of the Socialist Revolt," a price that became increasingly hard for Dollfuss to explain to foreign admirers of the Vienna welfare experiment, as the story of the workers' futile, bloody defense spread around the world. Thus was the goal of Starhemberg's Heimwehr reached: "The Fascist flag must fly over the Vienna Rathaus. Socialist heads must roll in the sand."⁴²

To American listeners Dollfuss made a radio speech, of which a phrase or two will suffice to show his "line": "The attack of a small group of fanatics against the State and society," referring to the Social Democrats; "This fight which we did not seek," and "It does not need the menace of civil war to preserve the rights of the working classes of Austria." Dollfuss gave the numbers killed as 241, and 658 wounded. The Times correspondents put those figures at 1,000 and 5,000 at the minimum, among them many women and children.⁴³

And in the midst of the forcible destruction of Austria's most powerful political party, what became of the final desperate call for the general strike? It was proclaimed, but the means for quick distribution of the strike order were missing. The Arbeiter Zeitung office was already in the hands of the Heimwehr, and no strike bulletins such as those in the 1927 general strike could be issued. The telephone lines from the leaders' homes were cut by the government or by the Heimwehr. Time was lost in sending personal messengers. Yet practically all the industrial workers joined the strike and assembled in their factories or their great apartment blocks to hear the mobilization plans of the Unions and the party.

In that short interval the general strike was defeated. The move that was intended to paralyze Vienna ended in victory for the government. Phones, railroads, and other essential means of communication and transportation were uninterrupted for the vital forty-eight hours, and that enabled the government to move troops and Heimwehr as it wished. The deepest irony of the crisis was the inability of Quai d'Orsay, the French Foreign Office, to reach Vienna by international telephone and issue

any warning against the destruction of the Social Democrats. France herself was, on that fatal Monday, February 12, 1934, in the throes of the most complete general strike its own labor forces had ever staged, in protest against the French forces of Fascism and Royalism.⁴⁴ (See Chapter XII above.)

What part did the Communists play in this last tragic stand of the Social Democrats? "Nothing," answers the *N. Y. Times*. "Like the Nazis, the Communists have played no part whatever." In fact, there were but 12,000 Communist voters in Vienna's 600,000. Walter Duranty used up more than one dispatch from Moscow trying to explain why Russian Soviet leaders were so silent and so puzzled about the Austrian Social Democrat struggle, when so many millions of active Communists in Germany had allowed themselves to be flattened out by the Nazis without any conflict.⁴⁵

In a speech to newsmen after the event Prince von Starhemberg summed up the tragedy by saying of his *Heimwehr* that they had strengthened Dollfuss in order to destroy Parliament and democracy.⁴⁶ It may be of interest to the historian that after the second World War, in February, 1953, twenty-one years after the destruction of the Social Democratic party, the "militantly anti-Communist Socialist party scored substantial gains in the Austrian Parliamentary elections, bringing them within one vote of Chancellor Figl's Conservative People's party's majority."⁴⁷

Twice, then, in seven years, the Austrian Social Democratic party and the Austrian trade unions called a political general strike to prevent civil war and the consequent Fascist revolution. In 1927 the general strike was successful in its aim, but in 1934 the call came too late to be effective, and the transportation and communications services were not stopped. Dollfuss destroyed the one remaining democratic bulwark between Austria and the German Nazi forces. His own assassination by the Nazis followed, and the "Anschluss" was accomplished.

The Netherlands Protest Strike⁴⁸

In April-May, 1943, a political general strike broke out in many parts of the Netherlands in protest against a decree ordering members of the former Dutch army to register and be taken back to captivity in Germany. This decree was due to an acute shortage of labor in Germany. Such re-internment of the Dutch army as prisoners of war was "an unexpected blow to an

already nervous population." It was apparent that every form of open resistance was premature at that moment, but spontaneous reactions of the masses could not be halted. The "only possible demonstration was a general strike." A strike wave broke out on April 29 in district Twente and spread to other districts, without consultation among the various strike leaders. A quiet word of approval from a leading local individual would suffice to ensure group solidarity.

Trades unions and political parties had been dissolved, and most agricultural organizations had disintegrated. Thus, churches, cooperative societies, social and sporting clubs were the remaining centers of contact. Fierce reactions by the population to the German decree surprised the leaders. The district where the strike was effective had average-sized plants and strong worker solidarity. Rumor of a strike in the metal industry was spread by workers living in the surrounding villages. The phone was used to carry the news where workers used the "sit-down" technique. Leaflets urging workers to strike were distributed by small groups.

The widespread effect of the decree suddenly involved virtually all families. The first slight movements in the factories where the strike started rapidly yielded to mass movements, "everyone laying down his tools when the rumors were confirmed." The wave of strikes extended to the very outskirts of the big industrial districts. The factory telephone operators gave great publicity to the outbreak of the strike. Dairy workers played a key rural role. Farmers met each other daily at the factory door. When the dairy factory workers quit work the desire to strike spread rapidly to the farmers. Idle dairies meant customer visits to the farms for milk and food. Direct contact of farmer and urban worker established a unity of purpose and action. The unanimity of the rural workers exceeded that of the city strikers, according to observers.

German Occupation leaders feared this work stoppage might reach to occupied France and Belgium, and might accelerate the allied invasion. It was an illusion that added troops could stop the extension of the strike. Except for Amsterdam and other large cities, it continued to widen. Failure of the big cities to join encouraged the Germans. By May 3, only a few areas remained where population was very stubborn and the strike continued. The absence of a rail stoppage helped the Germans to center their military forces in isolated strike

areas. Burgomasters and factory directors were ordered to be personally responsible for resumption of work. When such orders clearly failed, a number of people were shot. Arrests of factory directors, wild shooting in the streets, and other forms of intimidation showed the Dutch public that worse was to come if the strike were continued. Where the Catholic clergy had encouraged the walkout, penalties were not quite so severe. Many death sentences were published May 2, and they were immediately carried out. In some factory yards the Germans shot groups of workers. Only after May 7, when eighty death sentences had been put into effect and sixty persons had been shot at random in the streets, was the strike defeated. A seeming failure, this general strike "was the turning point in history of the resistance movement." Personalities capable of making good leaders had come to the fore, unreliable elements had been uncovered and traitors detected. (Compare the Danish strike against the Nazis in 1944. See below, Chapter XIV.)

The General Strike in Italy

Perhaps the most critically situated labor movement in Western Europe since World War II is that of Italy. The number of Italians voting for the extreme left is more than one-third of the electorate. Nor does the situation seem less grave when one recognizes that the labor market grows yearly by some 300,000, only half of whom find jobs.

It is almost as difficult to decide under which head to list the Italian general strikes as it is in the case of the French. The two Italian nation-wide strikes in the period preceding World War I had been aimed at the existing government rather than against Italian employers, and to that extent they were political, with an undercurrent of revolution. Over one million workers were involved in the strike of 1904. Its purpose was to protest the government's use of the military against workers in labor disputes. No economic question was a cause. In Milan 30,000 citizens gathered to add their protest to that of organized labor. Had the strike lasted only a day, the effect might have been considerable. As it was, by the night of the second day the teppisti, or urban hooligans, had started their work of riot and violence. Furthermore, the strike committees in several cities had roused the ire of businessmen and the public by exempting such industries as the workers' cooperative bakeries. In Milan, traditional center of left-wing labor, the dictatorship of the

proletariat was proclaimed unblushingly: "Milan is no more the town of all, but the town only of the proletariat."⁴⁹ Parliament refused to discuss the use of the military, and the general strike, which had all the appearance of a revolution that had miscarried, only strengthened the reactionary forces in Italy. The outcome led the Reformist Labor leader, Turati, to say, "The general strike, in violently disturbing the relations of economic life, cannot but end in a movement of reaction."⁵⁰

The second general strike of any size or duration before World War I took place on June 7, 1914, at Ancona. The authorities banned an antimilitarist meeting. The crowds gathered, and the police fired on the demonstrators, killing two. A protest general strike was called and spread rapidly to other areas and the larger cities. This movement was mainly revolutionary, one of its leaders being the Anarchist Malatesta, another, young Benito Mussolini, then editor of *Avanti*. This general strike is notable in that for the first time the non-Socialist public roused itself to combined action against the strikers.⁵¹

The strike was more complete in Rome than in Milan or Genoa — a reversal of the usual pattern. The Ancona incident gave rise to three movements otherwise little related. The Socialist party and the Federation of Labor proclaimed a nationwide general strike as soon as the Ancona news reached them. Independently and some hours earlier, a group of Republicans and Anarchists in Romagna demanded a cessation of work, stopped the rail service, and disabled telegraphs and telephones, thus achieving complete isolation from the rest of the country. This movement overflowed into the surrounding territory. The third movement was virtually a failure from the start, a declaration of a national rail strike to begin on June 10. But by the night of the tenth the Socialists and the Federation of Labor had called off their strike, implying that work was resumed by their permission. In fact, public parades were organized for June 10, led by the Nationalists, who used drastic methods on those who did not support the police and the army.⁵² The government itself resorted to labor weapons, cutting off the telegraph and telephone services as far as the Socialist and Labor executives were concerned. In completely isolated Romagna the red flag was flown and a republic declared. When communications were resumed the people of Romagna were distinctly surprised to learn that the rest of the country had not joined in the revolution.⁵³

During the closing days of World War I and after it had ended, a series of "sympathy" and general strikes turned Italy into a hotbed of revolutionary disturbances, against which, at last, the middle classes united in disgust. The Fascists, with all their excesses, were the inevitable corollary to the preceding Anarcho-Syndicalist campaigns. In the period of Fascist control between the two world wars, therefore, there were no general strikes nor any autonomous unions to call them. There was, perhaps, one vital difference between the rule of the Fascists and that of the Nazis. In general the Fascists did not kill the leaders of the free labor movement. Prison, exile, or flight was the penalty. When, therefore, Fascism fell at the advance of the Allies, many experienced leaders were able to reorganize a labor movement in Italy. At the beginning it was a united labor movement including Catholic, Communist, and Socialist unions of the pre-Fascist period.⁵⁴ As in France, so in Italy, the Communists became the dominant element in the General Confederation of Labor (C.G.I.L.) because, as in France, they had constituted an active part of the resistance movement, once the Nazi-Soviet Pact had been violated. Furthermore, the Communist party was the only anti-Fascist party that remained organized in Italy during the Fascist regime. When the Allies took over, they permitted the Fascist Labor office buildings to be seized by the Communist C.G.I.L.⁵⁵ This fact, together with the experience in the underground and the influence of Communist party funds in an otherwise utterly poverty-stricken movement, help to explain why the C.G.I.L. was from 1945 so much more powerful than either the Catholic Federation (C.I.S.L.) or the Socialist (U.I.L.). That the Communists have dominated the grievance committees in Italian industrial plants since 1943 is but another sample of their "know-how."⁵⁶ For years, moreover, the Italian government financed the Communist press indirectly. The printing shop that prints L'Unità and the Communist papers and posters belongs to the government as trustee of the property formerly belonging to Fascist labor unions. A recent inquiry into the print shop indicated that it was in debt to the tune of half a million dollars; for years it had printed L'Unità at only a fraction of the price set by the Italian Newspaper Printers' Association. In 1947 the Communists were forced out of the Italian government; three years later they claimed some three and one half million members, as against 800,000 in the C.I.S.L. and 200,000 in the U.I.L.

The main weakness of the Italian labor unions is their extreme poverty. Membership dues are insignificant, but no Italian worker is going to pay larger dues if he can't see any unity in the movement. Poverty, moreover, has a hand in the frequent resort to violence in strikes in order to shorten their duration, since there are no effective union funds to aid strikers. Violence in the labor movement is, of course, meat and drink to the Communist party. The dynamic fact about the Communists in Italy is that, with the close of the war they found Southern Italy a virtually feudal agricultural system, wide open to their blandishments. The Christian Democrats (Catholic) and the Monarchists rushed in to exploit this new field of political action, largely cancelling each other out, and leaving the harvest to be reaped by the Communists.

The industrial North had already been fully exploited by them, and their voting strength in the Northern cities may fall off, if it changes at all. Recently, therefore, Communist stress has been laid upon Southern Italy and the Italian woman. Handpicked Communist women have been receiving intensive training in propaganda schools in various parts of Italy, the better to swing Italian women voters from the Catholic parties to that of the Communists. 57

Economic strikes were common enough in Italy after World War I, though seldom longer in duration than a very few days. The general strike, however, frequently called by Communist leaders for political rather than economic aims, seems increasingly to have lost caste even with the members of the C.G.I.L. The aim of the party (through general strikes to stalemate all efforts by the United States to rehabilitate the economic life of Italy) ceases to appeal to workers, who gain nothing from Communist policy, but lose their sorely needed daily wage. True, party intrigue is subtle. It adapts itself to the opinion of every region it seeks to conquer. Members of the party, for example, masqueraded as stalwart nationalists in the 1948 elections, using as their symbol not the hammer and sickle, but Garibaldi, the nineteenth century hero. In the same way the Communists continually echoed the Italian demand for the return of Trieste, as will be shown below. 58

Space permits only an outline of the party use of the general strike after World War I. Chronological order of the strike calls will give the reader some sense of the growth or decline of the weapon in Italy.

1946, March: A Trieste Associated Press wire of March 13

reported a general strike in the British-American zone of Venezia Giulia Province at the time when a four-power Allied Commission was investigating conflicting Italian and Yugoslav border claims. The tension was increased by a surprise demonstration of some 100,000 persons parading past the Commission's headquarters. This strike had been called in protest against the slaying of two persons in a suburb of Trieste. The strikers blamed the police. All shops and businesses were closed; Trieste was as quiet as on a Sunday. Il Progresso, Italian-Slav anti-Fascist organ, carried news of the two deaths and the call for a general strike. The police of the district involved were organized by the British government.

1946, July: Again, the Associated Press wire, dated July 2, carried the word that 200,000 workers were on strike throughout Venezia Giulia and on into Gorizia; the telephone lines between Trieste and Rome failed. American troops were stoned as they broke up a mob attacking the Communist party headquarters. During the night a mob broke into the plant of Il Progresso, where several Slav and leaflet newspapers were printed, and damaged the machinery. The rioting resulted in a call for a general strike which halted all traffic and closed public establishments in Trieste and the surrounding provincial areas of Venezia Giulia.

1946, July: While authorities succeeded in settling a general strike in Turin, new ones were reported in Novara Province and at Mola near Bari, the latter to show solidarity with war veterans returning from Russian prison camps.

1946, December: Arnaldo Cortesi, in the N. Y. Times, reported from Rome on December 18:

A general strike proclaimed in Naples yesterday continued in full swing today, despite conciliatory measures decreed in an emergency Cabinet meeting. The strikers prevented the appearance of newspapers that in their opinion are not 'an expression of the popular will.' The strikers also took over the Naples broadcasting station which now gives only news of the strike and instructions to strikers. The only shops open are those selling food. All public services except the most essential are at a standstill. 59

This strike was called by the Naples Chamber of Labor. A significant factor was the admission by the Communist party

organ, L'Unità, that the strike was largely political. UNRRA was accused of deliberately withholding wheat from Italy in order to show that Italy's daily bread depended on Britain and the United States; the wheat would arrive, said L'Unità, when the situation had become graver; the general strike in Naples threatened to spread; was a protest against food scarcities, prices being 50 per cent above those in other cities. UNRRA's answer was that an undelivered backlog of 100,000 tons of wheat was caused by strikes in the United States.

1947, October: In the main streets of Milan, Communist-dominated labor unions staged a three-hour general work stoppage as a political demonstration against the (Christian Democrat) government. "The Communists again proved that they were able to paralyze the Northern cities whenever they wished." '60 Work stoppage was almost complete, in many cases lasting for more than the announced three hours. During the strike demonstration, a group of unidentified persons raided the right-wing Meridiano d'Italia and set fire to the offices, escaping before the police could arrive.

1947, December: Again with the purpose of weakening the Christian Democrat government of De Gasperi, to compel him to admit Communists into his cabinet, and to discredit the Marshall Plan aid, Communist leader Togliatti, simultaneously with a party offensive in France, precipitated "Italy's worst wave of disorders since the war." At first these disorders took the form of mob attacks on centrist and right-wing newspapers. Hundreds of strikes were organized. Early in December a riot in a Rome suburb led the police to fire into the mob with the consequent death of a demonstrator. The Rome Chamber of Labor, local headquarters of the Communist-controlled C. G. I. L., presented Premier De Gasperi with an ultimatum: a) punishment of the police; b) immediate appropriation of \$16,000,000 for public works for the unemployed of Rome; c) a Christmas bonus to all Rome workers. The government offered a compromise, much of which had already been planned, but the Chamber of Labor rejected the offer, and called a general strike in the city and province of Rome.

Half a million workers walked out, but by the afternoon they were beginning to trickle back to work. The police had enforced the government's pledge to protect those who did not wish to strike. In the scuffles resulting, Communist Deputies of the Constituent Assembly were clubbed by the police. This caused

a stormy meeting in the Assembly, led by Nenni, left-wing Socialist, who declared that only re-admission of the left wing into the Cabinet would bring internal peace in Italy.

By the second day only half of the strikers remained out. The government believed the strike to be failing, as was evidenced by the disappearance of the military from the streets. On the first day of the strike scores of military vehicles and thousands of members of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force had helped to maintain order. The strike was called off on the second day by the Chamber of Labor. Avanti, left-wing Socialist organ, and L'Unità, the Communist journal, claimed a sensational victory. The rest of the press held the general strike a failure, threatened with complete collapse had it not been called off. In the Assembly Premier De Gasperi was given a vote of confidence of 216 to 111.⁶¹

1948, April: The disappearance of a Communist leader from the Chamber of Labor offices in Sicily brought a threat from de Vittorio, Communist president of the C.G.I.L., that, if the police failed to find the lost leader by April 8, a nationwide general strike would be called, which would paralyze Italy for ten days before the election day of April 18. If the strike were called, it would be for one hour's duration on the first day, and be increased by one hour each succeeding day, until on the day before election it would be a ten-hour strike.⁶²

1950, March: In protest against the death of two farm hands in a demonstration, a twelve-hour nation-wide general strike was called by the C.G.I.L. It was a reaction against the government restrictive measures designed to curtail mass agitation. The strike was substantially complete in the major industrial plants and in local transportation in the large Northern cities. Communist control was evident in such areas. This indicated in some degree the effectiveness of coercion by the Communists in the larger concerns. In the smaller plants and offices they failed to get much support. To the extent that its purpose was to gain popular support for the Communists against Premier De Gasperi's government, the strike fell far short of success. As the culmination of a series of small, regional demonstrations, it did cement the pro-Communist elements, but at the price of raising a strong reaction from non-Communist unions and parties.

The fact that an important meeting was taking place in Rome on March 22 (American Ambassadors to Russia, Britain,

France and Italy, together with the German High Command) may well have been one reason for the choice of that day by the C.G.I.L. It was the second time in three months that the Communists had disrupted rail traffic between North and South and on the East and West lines.⁶³

1953, March: An Associated Press Rome wire on March 30 announced that the Communists, seeking to protest the new election law of Premier De Gasperi, had been outvoted in a riotous legislative session, and that their call for a general strike throughout the nation for sixteen hours had met with little success. Minister of Interior Mario Scelba, later to become Prime Minister, ordered his crack battalions of anti-riot police to repress disturbances. The bill which had caused the riotous filibuster gave to any party or bloc of parties polling over 50 per cent of the popular vote a bonus, so that it would receive actually 65 per cent of the vote.

1953, June: The U.S. Embassy and American consulates throughout Italy were well guarded on June 20, lest a fifteen-minute general work stoppage called by the C.G.I.L. in protest against the execution in the United States of the Rosenbergs for espionage should lead to violent demonstrations. "Anti-Communist unions countered the Communist-led strike by calling one of their own to protest against the 'massacre of Berlin workers fighting to safeguard their bread and human liberties.' The two strikes running concurrently brought services to an effective standstill but it was impossible to tell which strikers were protesting against what."⁶⁴

1954, February: The C.G.I.L. called a general strike in Rome for February 16, with the double aim of unseating the new government of one-time Interior Minister, now Premier, Mario Scelba, and to achieve increased pay scales. Bakers walked out at midnight. Thousands of trade union members followed suit later. Telephone workers were included in the strike call, and gas and electric workers were ordered out at seven A.M. After a series of strikes in Northern Italy, the leftist union leaders were carrying their offensive into Rome.

The vast majority of these political strikes were called by the Italian Communists, with decreasing effect as time passed, and as the workers became more and more indifferent to the particular political aims of the party. Even the Communists recognized that occasional seemingly economic strikes must be interspersed with the party-line walkouts. A sample of this

semi-economic, semi-political strike was that in Naples in December, 1946, when UNRRA was accused of deliberately withholding grain from Italy. How long general strikes would be permitted if the party once attained actual numerical majority in the elections and took over the government of Italy is answered by East Germany and Hungary.

German labor's dramatic use of the general strike to prevent the overthrow of the Social Democrat government of Premier Ebert in 1920 has been told above, together with the penalties which were inflicted upon the strikers who rashly believed that labor's Junker enemies were defeated by that strike. Abortive revolutionary general strikes in Germany occurring between the defeat of the Kaiser's armies and the Kapp-Putsch are recorded in the next chapter. There remain to be described the threat, or the actual use, of the general stoppage by West German labor after the defeat of Hitler Germany, and a startling upheaval in East Germany which showed that the Communist strike weapon had surprisingly effective repercussions when it was turned against the party of the Kremlin.

One of the earliest general strikes, if not the first, in Western Germany after the defeat of Hitler took place on February 3, 1948. At least a million and a half workers stayed away from their jobs in a quiet but effective protest against various food administrations in the American and British zones. It was as much a protest against the bungling of their own German officials as against the Occupation. In the area affected it paralyzed industries, shops, railroads, and some other public utilities. U.S. officials termed it a "complete general strike," and declared that it reached into every hamlet and town. Lack of meat and fat rations seems to have been the bitterest complaint. "The fact that Communist activity was playing no large role was taken by United States authorities as a sign that the strikes were 'a desperate action with deep roots' that could repeat themselves so long as food rations remained low."65

Co-Determination in Western Germany

Long experience of labor control by government and industry in Bismarckian and Hitlerite Germany brought a most natural reaction from organized German labor after Hitler's defeat. To the revived D. G. B., the (West) German Trade Union Federation, cartelized industry and its cooperation with totalitarian government were the perils that the newborn

German labor movement had to battle. German labor was convinced that time would bring back the old and brutal collaboration of government and big business, with yet another war as its outcome. Only a constant oversight of the policies and actions of the big industries by labor representatives could prevent a disastrous repetition of history. To attain what labor felt was industrial democracy called for the use of the drastic general strike weapon. Even before the establishment of the D. G. B., "In their first public demonstration, the general work stoppage of November 12, 1948, the unions called for 'democratization of the economy and full co-determination of the trade-unions in all organs of economic control.'"66 In common language, the new German trade union movement (non-Communist) in Western Germany was demanding the right of the workers' chosen representatives to "sit in the office" and be fully consulted in matters of industry policies and practice. This meant more than the American notion of labor-management cooperation. It implied, to industry, a long reach by organized labor into the territory of management prerogatives.

Following the collapse of the Kaiser's Empire in 1918, the management of German industry, by force of circumstances, agreed to the "solution of all economic and social problems" by process of cooperation with the unions. The Agreement of November 1918 had virtually ceased to function by 1923. Once again, therefore, in 1950 the attempt was made by government-approved negotiations between labor and management to revive the joint consultation pattern. Unhappily, negotiations broke down, and by management default the issue went to Parliament. Through 1951 labor's "new order" was the object of continuous discussion between labor and government. The time rapidly approached when the coal, iron and steel industries had to be re-organized and decentralized. In the British Zone the Occupation authorities had already given Ruhr miners and steel workers an important share in managerial decisions. Labor feared the loss of this joint control as soon as the Occupation armies yielded to native German business. The D. G. B.'s efforts to obtain joint control in all German industry were still without success. Here, then, was a critical step toward the general goal. Industry-wide strikes were therefore authorized for the metal workers and miners for February 1, 1951, unless co-determination in those industries had been obtained by law. More than that, the whole D. G. B. pledged itself to cooperate,

which meant at the worst a general strike.⁶⁷

Shortly before the date fixed for the strike an agreement was reached by the two unions immediately involved, and managerial experts were appointed by the federal government. After intense and stormy argument in both houses of Parliament, the main terms of the agreement were passed into law. By December 31, 1951, the law was in effect in the different types of corporations affected, largely following the arrangements previously established in the British Zone of Occupation. The main bone of contention subsequently in other industries was the degree of worker participation in policy decisions. Where, under this first step (coal and steel), the share in decisions had been on a fifty-fifty basis as between labor and management, the remainder of German industry ultimately obtained a greatly weakened plan of one-third representation of labor as against two-thirds for management and stockholders.⁶⁸

The bill that gave legal sanction to the codetermination arrangements for the rest of industry was pushed through its final reading in the face of bitter opposition from the Social Democrat party, July 19, 1952. The leader of the Social Democrat party told the house at the angriest moment of the debate that six and a half million members of the West German Trade Union Federation (D.G.B.) "might well express their opposition together" against the new law — a pretty plain threat of a general strike. Labor's bone of contention was that the new act gave a lower ratio of labor representation than did the coal and steel act of 1951, and that the public services must also grant to labor the same right of codetermination as private industry. In fact, the strike did not materialize, but an all-out effort took place at the next election to defeat Chancellor Adenauer and his Catholic party. In mid-September of 1953 the election proved a total and personal victory for the Chancellor.⁶⁹

Conflict over codetermination ran close competition to protest against the re-arming of Western Germany, as far as the Social Democrats and the D.G.B. were concerned. On January 22, 1955, a twenty-four hour protest strike was staged in the Ruhr, in which nearly 900,000 miners and steel workers took part. This was a reaction against the comment of Chairman Berg of the Federation of German Industry that everyone in Germany realized that the original codetermination law had been passed under threat of a general strike. Labor's fear of cancellation of the codetermination act of 1951 was justified by

the attitude of Dr. Hermann Reusch, managing director of one of the steel combines, who claimed that codetermination had been granted as a result of union blackmail against government and management. Dr. Reusch's corporation was in the front of the campaign by the steel companies to reconstruct the prewar trusts in coal and steel. This movement was accelerated as the time for withdrawal of the Occupation drew near. A bill before the West German Parliament early in 1955 planned to reduce the labor representatives on the boards of the new holding companies to the status of observers, rather than copartners with management. It is evident that the threatened loss of codetermination rights will bring strong support to the D.G.B. from the Social Democrats, the Railroad Workers and the other industrial union groups. The makings are there for further use of the general strike weapon.⁷⁰

"June Days" in East Germany, 1953

Without any apparent warning to West or East Germany in 1953 a wild revolt of workers and middle class against the Grotewohl (Communist) government of East Germany broke out in East Berlin and throughout most of the other industrial centers and cities. Allied Intelligence, the Socialist Union party (East German Communist party), the Communist government, and the Soviet Occupation forces – one and all appear to have agreed on one thing, that the outbreak was completely unexpected.⁷¹ This fact does not stand in the way of post facto search for the reasons for the outbreak of June 17, 1953.

For eight years the eighteen million population of East Germany had endured Russian occupation and Communist control. Occasional outbursts of sabotage had been the only overt form of protest against the oppression and confiscation carried on by the puppet regime under the guns of Soviet Russia. Essential causes of the explosion can be suggested: Religious persecution of ministers, churches and church youth groups had reached a dangerous point, with Communist "Free German Youth" as one of the instruments of persecution. A second factor was the deterioration of the already intolerable food situation, fats and meat having become almost unobtainable, together with shortages of bread and potatoes. Furthermore, the Grotewohl government was fanatically pushing the final control over industry and agriculture, with the seizure of private businesses and co-operatives. These steps raised middle-class ire and brought

despair to the farmers, who were fleeing to West Germany in great numbers. The igniting spark, however, was the government's call for immediate, higher productivity, at lower pay, from the factory workers of East Germany. This drive for lower overhead costs got under way in May, 1953, with specious newspaper items alleging that workers themselves had suggested this tightening up of the work "norms." At this juncture Mr. Semeonov, Ambassador to East Germany from Soviet Russia, and Soviet High Commissioner, took over absolute control of Eastern Germany. Disliking the effects of the steps already described, Semeonov appears to have inspired the Grotewohl government's "confession of error" and the reversal of its policy, with the sole exception of the raised "norms" of production. A week before the revolt, Grotewohl met the Church leaders and announced important concessions. Benefits to the middle class and the farmers were also pledged. Only the workers were left with no share in the handout, but with a ten per cent wage cut.⁷²

East German workers were experienced in the trick of "norms": refinements of the "speed-up" granted to a worker who introduced an improvement which would raise the production norm. Four months at the old norm were his reward, while his fellows had to face pay cuts or comply with the new norm. Spontaneous and open resistance resulted. Workers unanimously rejected the new norm contracts. Others in large numbers absented themselves from their jobs. The arrest of protesting miners led to riots and the death and injury of several of the People's Police. The Soviet military were called into one plant.⁷³ These events occurred in 1951-52, so that the Grotewohl government could hardly claim to have been completely unaware of what their fanatical pressure for production would do to the East German workers.

Whatever the origins of the general strike protest of June 17, it is clear that trouble began innocently enough, as described by the N. Y. Times:

Tuesday morning hundreds of workers assembled outside Stalin Allee to protest a recent increase in work quotas. In phalanx formation they marched down Unter den Linden. There were jeers and curses for officials. Some Communist noses got punched. The police stood by impassively, clearing traffic from the line of march. At 2 P.M. the

East German Government announced that the quota order was a 'mistake' and would be rescinded. The workers dispersed in good order.⁷⁴

The next morning, Wednesday, June 17, was the real thing. Despite rain, workers, peasants, boys and stragglers converged; violence flared. Police were savagely beaten. On the top of the Brandenburg Gate the Soviet flag yielded to the red, black and gold ensign of Western Germany. Russian tanks held off the rioters. Martial law was declared. Russian soldiers proceeded in their tanks to clear the streets. The Soviet military courts took over, condemned and shot an unemployed West German painter. By the weekend thousands of East Germans had been arrested and jailed. But for the Red Army, the tale would have been very different. On the morning of the seventeenth, cities were strike-bound all over East Germany, from Thuringia on the Baltic coast to the Saxon industrial areas near the Czech border. Leaders sprang up, many of them trade unionists who had given up trying appeals to the government-controlled trade union executives. Strike committees emerged to frame resolutions demanding the abolition of higher production norms, free elections, and the end of Grotewohl's regime.⁷⁵ Jails were opened for the release of political prisoners. In many towns the People's Police did little to maintain order, or joined the marchers and shouted for liberty with the rest. It was the German Communist fanatics in German type uniforms, military-trained and infused with the Communist ideology, who did most of the shooting at the crowds, not the Red Army. The strike leaders were not the unemployed, nor the hoodlums, but responsible men who were tired but courageous, risking their homes, jobs and families.⁷⁶

Peace did not reign after the explosions. For months after June 17, the press carried reports of "spies" tried and sentenced, of trainloads of ex-strikers headed for the Soviet Union and exile, and of sit-down strikers and sabotage in the mines and plants of East Germany.⁷⁷ There may well be some question whether the "underground workers' organization that made such widespread coordinated demonstrations possible" was not in part a continued tie with the old Social Democrat labor organizations of West Germany. West Berlin Socialists denied any part in organizing the strike.⁷⁸

Perhaps this East German example of the general strike,

spontaneous though it seemed to be, indicates the extreme difficulty of separating the aspects that we have chosen to classify as Economic, Political, and Revolutionary. It was not a hunger protest as in Western Germany in 1946, nor a demand for code-termination such as occurred a few years later in the same country. Yet it was economic in the sense that the basic work load was a vital issue, as was the threatened cut in the take-home pay. But above all, it was a fiercely integrated protest against a government imposed upon the people and continued against the people's will by sheer force of military power. Was this factor political, or was it revolutionary? It is significant that a new labor law for (Soviet) East Germany now bans all strikes.

Cyprus and "Enosis" with Greece

How ubiquitous is the general strike weapon can be seen in its appearance during the period 1954 to 1959 in Cyprus, "an ancient and sophisticated island where Saint Paul himself was preaching Christianity when the ancient Britons were covered with woad and lived in mud huts."⁷⁹ On August 11, 1954, eighty-five Mayors and Municipal Councillors of the British island colony met and rejected the British idea of a constitution that failed to make provision for an ultimate union of Cyprus and Greece. This was on the eve of a general strike, called by left-wing and right-wing unions and agriculturalists to protest the severe measures invoked by the British government, which desired to suppress the Enosis movement among the Greek-speaking majority of the islanders. These measures included a ban upon any public mention in speech or press of the subject of union - "Enosis." The sedition law in effect provided a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment. The ban was ignored openly by Archbishop Makarios, Patriarch of the island's Greek Orthodox Church, when in a sermon he urged upon his hearers the resort to the general strike.⁸⁰

On the twelfth of August, 1954, the twenty-four hour general strike was observed "in unexcited fashion," when "most shops and offices were closed in the major cities."⁸¹ The only exceptions were food handling establishments, forbidden by law from closing, and businesses managed by Turks, the religious minority on the island, and of course any concern run by the British. All demonstrations were forbidden; so there were no parades or meetings. The Turks - one-fifth of the island's

population — had made clear that they would oppose any change in the existing sovereignty of the island. The situation was manifestly an unhappy one for Britain, for she had just decided to relinquish her control over the Suez Canal, and her air and army bases on Cyprus were the logical destination for the soldiers withdrawn from Suez. The Greek Cypriotes alleged that the NATO bases would still be yielded to Britain, even if union with Greece took place. The British contended that there were great numbers of Communists on the island in control of the unions, and that if those thousands were added to the Greek Communist underground they might take over the whole territory.⁸²

Be that as it may, the Greek government requested of the United Nations that the people of Cyprus be given an opportunity to vote for union with Greece. When the United States supported in the United Nations a British move to put off consideration of the Union of Cyprus with Greece, a series of riotous demonstrations took place in Cypriot cities. A further twenty-four-hour general strike was called and observed by the workers, who mainly stayed off the streets. Schoolboy rioters caused the most trouble during this strike, called as it was by Communists, Nationalists, and trade unions to protect the United Nations' decision. Tear gas was used against the demonstrators, and twenty-three persons were injured in the capital city of Nicosia.⁸³

Once again the problem of the right category for such general strikes as these just described is difficult. Political they certainly were; whether we can go further and term them revolutionary is doubtful. As usual, the Communists had both purposes in mind, and theirs was the only group that gained from the dispute. Yet another general strike against British policies occurred on September 28, 1955, which in turn led to rioting and the intervention of the military forces. As time passed, the situation grew worse, losing Britain even the support of the friendly Greeks on the mainland.⁸⁴ The exile of Archbishop Makarios to the Seychelles Islands added to the bitterness and violence, and started a long general strike beginning on March 10, 1956.⁸⁵ The deportation of the Archbishop received a majority vote in the House of Commons. It brought upon the Conservative government of Sir Anthony Eden the biting comment of the Manchester Guardian that the British government had removed the only man with whom it might have negotiated,

making him a hero and martyr, so that now the government had nothing left but coercion as a policy in Cyprus.⁸⁶ Said the N. Y. Times: "The British are cracking down on the Cypriots' favorite form of passive resistance – the general strike. Fifty shopkeepers in Nicosia have been arrested for closing their stores during the spontaneous shut-down of all work that followed the deportation of Archbishop Makarios."⁸⁷

Such a situation had to improve or deteriorate. Gradually the Cypriot underground (E.O.K.A.) broadened its scope. Where it had been concerned with the Greek Cypriot population on the island, using reprisals of a sadistic nature, now it began to include the British civilian group. Often murder lurked under the cloak of patriotism.⁸⁸ Despite the presence of 30,000 British troops on the island in mid-October, 1958, there was no assurance of civil peace.

Nevertheless, as early as March, 1957, Makarios was released with the injunction not to return to Cyprus. A British plan which offered to the Cypriotes partial independence set off new riots and a further general strike. All through 1957-58 general strikes of one- or two-day duration were common, until rumors began to spread of possible negotiation. By February, 1959, these rumors became positive. The interests involved – NATO, the Greek and Turkish nations – made Cyprus headline news for the world. Before the end of the month, requisite papers had been signed to give Cyprus independence by February, 1960, while safeguarding NATO and the British bases. Colonel Grivas, E.O.K.A. leader, ordered his followers to end the struggle in Cyprus and support Archbishop Makarios. Accepting the settlement terms without reserve, he announced his determination henceforth to stay away from political life in Cyprus and Greece. The return of Makarios to Cyprus was a five-hour triumph in the streets.⁸⁹ The general strike weapon plainly was political in this struggle, but of rather doubtful revolutionary caliber.

Haiti

Haiti in 1956-57 presented an unusual aspect of the general strike. This Negro nation of the Caribbean came near to civil war at that time over the issue which of ten candidates should be elected President. Business men led at least three general strikes, unseating temporarily a military dictatorship. The Republic of Haiti is the only French-speaking country in Latin

America, and with the Dominican Republic constitutes the island of Haiti. On December 6, 1956, General Paul Magloire resigned as provisional Chief of State under pressure of a nation-wide general strike, which was in protest against his assumption of dictatorial powers. That only the army could meet the terrorism rife on the island was his excuse.⁹⁰ The rising against Magloire came after three days of general strike in which most union labor quit, and the majority of stores, plants, and offices closed. The Lawyers Association ceased from pleading cases in court. "The people generally expressed surprise at the effectiveness of the general strike as a substitute for the violence usually employed to oust an unpopular Chief of State."⁹¹

General Magloire's presidential term had ended December 6, and he had handed over the reins of government to the head of the Supreme Court, as required in the Haiti constitution. The court asked the army to assume direction of Haiti because of terrorism and unrest, and asked for the use of exceptional methods of keeping order. The constitution does not permit a president to succeed himself.⁹² The strike had been planned for five-day duration. As food was largely bought daily in the market at Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, a close-down of business was serious.

February of 1957 saw a second general strike, this time against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Pierre Louis, who had succeeded Magloire until an election could be held. City planes, phones and telegraphs were crippled for three days.⁹³ Armed troops and fire engines were required to keep possible rioters in order. Two candidates for president called a general strike.⁹⁴ In less than two months the third interim ruler, Franck Sylvain, was put under army arrest as a general strike again hit Haiti.⁹⁵ In all three of the strikes business and labor combined for action. This was evident through the month of May, when the army under Brigadier General Léon Cantave tried to oust the feuding presidential candidates. Cantave had dissolved the nation's Executive Council in return for its dismissal of Cantave! Again, two candidates claimed responsibility for the fourth general strike.⁹⁶

Cantave had used threats to business men to persuade them to keep their places open for business, but May 27 saw the strike successful and candidate Fignole provisional president; election day was postponed and Fignole announced his candidacy

for president, to the great unhappiness of the remaining aspirants.⁹⁷ In June Fignole was exiled to New York for fostering his own election. A three-man military Junta took over in the midst of violence. September 21 saw the long and frequently postponed elections, under the strict control of the military Junta.⁹⁸

The election, in a land where the electorate was 90 per cent illiterate, gave an overwhelming majority to Dr. Duvalier, a forty-eight year old medical man and former head of the Department of Health. M. Dejoie, a candidate for president, threatened to call another general strike in reprisal for his defeat, but martial law was declared, and the population appeared satisfied for the time. This did not mean that the average peasant was not in desperate economic plight.

The most significant aspect of the general strikes in Haiti was the assumption of strike leadership by professional or business men in at least three instances. Their general goal might be said to be the prevention of civil war by the limitation of power in the hands of politicians and the armed forces. They were political strikes with only an indirect economic purpose. The general public, moreover, was most agreeably surprised to find how much could be achieved without resort to the bloodshed of civil war.

Chapter XIV

THE REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL STRIKE

Russia in 1905

What manner of social atmosphere is it that takes an apparently simple economic strike, for more wages or shorter hours, and brings it swiftly to a "rolling boil" with vast thunderheads blacking out the scenery, and lightning that strikes innocent and guilty alike? It must be evident to the reader by this time that an economic general strike, despite its revolutionary logic, has frequently been called without being converted into a savage revolutionary weapon. Lands with democratic institutions — parliament, free press, secret ballot — seldom suffer an economic general strike to end in armed insurrection and revolution.

Can a revolutionary general strike be cut out of whole cloth, with no professional leadership or planned and prolonged incitement? What is the truth about the "spontaneity" of such a weapon? Would the objective student of mass action expect to find a feudalist nation a likely situs for a powerful revolutionary general strike affecting incipient national industries and all national means of communication? Russia in 1905 offered just such an historic event.

The January, 1905, mass strike was not the first in Russia. Sporadic outbreaks had occurred in March, 1902, in Batum, Nizhni-Novgorod and Saratov. December of the same year saw one in Rostov-on-the-Don. In 1903 and 1904 there were general strikes in Baku, Tiflis, Batum, Odessa and Kiev, to mention some of the cities affected. They differed from the ordinary run of walkouts in Western Europe in suddenness, extent, and speedy development from economic struggles into political movements with a revolutionary character. Craft barriers were rapidly submerged in these strikes, and their impetus led to an inevitable conflict with the authority of the state. They were advance warnings of the storm which reached its full force in the October general strike of 1905.¹

It has been said that Russia never passed through the laissez faire phase of the modern capitalist state. Despite the push of large French capital loans and the pull of Count Witte's governmental encouragement of industrial establishment in the larger

Russian cities, patriarchal and paternalistic relations between peasant and landowner set the pattern for the whole Empire of the Czar. The big cities provided what meager industrial proletariat could be found. Under the police law of 1886 workers were forbidden to form trade unions. Governors had the power to arrest strike leaders. The workers, however, found no difficulty in meeting secretly, and as time passed the city workers came more and more under the influence of revolutionary leaders.²

Strategic telegraph and railroad lines linked together the manifold peoples and customs of the Russian Empire for the waging of external war. In fact, these vital lines of communication aided even more effectively the strategy of internal revolution, for it was the temporary paralysis of them by the strikers that in 1905 hampered the government's use of autocratic repression — police, secret police, and the military.

The surrender of Port Arthur to the Japanese in 1905 and the loss of the war against Japan brought a tremendous shock to the peasants and workers of Russia. The sufferings of the conscript peasants at the front or in side-tracked hospital trains on the Trans-Siberian railroad, together with the inefficiency and graft in the government's handling of the war, stirred rebellious emotions in the peasant and urban worker (the latter also a peasant within at least one generation), even without the constant goad of Social Revolutionaries, Social Democrats, and the smaller, radical groups that believed in bombs and personal violence.

A still greater shock came to peasant and worker with the fatal twenty-second of January, 1905. The secret police had organized a type of "company union" in the factories of the large cities, supposedly to weaken any genuine union movement. Father Gapon, a young priest who was alleged to have been appointed as organizer of these company unions, took a strangely active role in the events of that day. Four of the leaders of a company union had been dismissed from their jobs in the Putilov Works at St. Petersburg. Father Gapon, trying to intercede, was met with a point-blank refusal of a hearing by the Chief of Police. He then promoted a strike, which swiftly spread to other plants.³

With the motif of the Czar as the "Father of his People," Gapon led a vast array of peasants and workers to the Winter Palace with a petition for popular liberties. Needless to say,

the imperial soldiery and the police met the paraders with point-blank fusillades; then the Cossacks rode them down. The slaughter lasted for hours. The masses seemed incapable of registering that the occupant of the Winter Palace was not their Czar.⁴ Gapon escaped to Switzerland, and later returned to Russia, where he was assassinated by a student revolutionary who believed him to be a police spy.

The events of that terrible Sunday in January called forth an immediate widespread sympathy strike in many Russian cities and in Russian Poland. In all these areas the same tactics were used: crowds of strikers would march from factory to factory, calling or forcing out the workers as they passed. In many cities students in the schools and universities refused to attend classes as long as the strike was in force.⁵ The St. Petersburg trouble ended long before the sympathy strikes elsewhere. January 25 saw posted everywhere in the city a notice giving the strikers twenty-four hours' grace, after which they would be deported to their native villages if they did not return to work. It was also announced that the Czar was drafting a law shortening the hours of labor and making legal the discussion of workers' needs. By January 28 the city was almost normal. It must not be forgotten that the London Times correspondent in St. Petersburg had stated that "on no occasion on Sunday was the crowd in a hostile or riotous mood."⁶

These strikes were undoubtedly involved with economic demands, but were by no means confined to them. The Father Gapon and the Leon Trotskys had a power to move these masses to swift action in demand for popular political rights as well as for economic improvements. Wrote Trotsky:

After the bloody 22nd of January a magnificent strike wave surged over the whole country, shaking it to its very foundations.... The proletarian masses were stirred to their depths. The strike drew nearly a million men into its ranks.... The strikers, themselves, those who sympathized with the strike and those who feared and hated it, all understood dimly that this furious strike... which raged from place to place... was not here of its own force but was merely carrying out the will of the Revolution.⁷

If the last sentence means anything at all, it suggests that the economic sympathy strike and the political strike, when

followed to their logical conclusion, led to the revolutionary strike. By 1904 Trotsky had in his own mind a picture of how the general strike would serve as the tool that would bring revolution. Some of his conclusions sound to us, half a century later, rather naive:

Tear the workers away from the machines and the workshops; lead them through the factory gate out into the street; direct them to neighboring factories; proclaim a stoppage there; and carry new masses into the street. Thus moving from factory to factory...sweeping away police obstacles...taking possession of the first suitable buildings for public meetings, entrenching yourselves within those buildings, using them for uninterrupted revolutionary meetings with a permanently shifting and changing audience, you shall bring order into movement of the masses, raise their confidence...thus you shall eventually transform the city into a revolutionary camp.... 8

The absence of mention of the "counter-revolution" and what the multifarious "Citizens' Committees" would be doing in the meantime is significant. It did not take Trotsky long, however, to conclude that the revolutionary general strike would fail but for the friendly neutrality of the police and the military, if not the active arming of the strikers.

The October Revolution

The summer of 1905 saw increasing disillusion among the Russian workers. Early in August the Duma was promulgated, but with no powers to legislate, and at the mercy of the government, which, under the law, had the authority to suspend its members at any time. Furthermore, St. Petersburg, with over a million population, had but 13,000 electors. This mockery roused popular passion to fever heat. 9

The general strike of October, 1905, was the immediate cause of the "October Revolution," but its occurrence was apparently accidental, and even to the Socialist underground seems to have been unexpected. Yet it was a measure of the intensity of preparation for revolution since the fatal twenty-second of January. Leagues or unions of the chief professions had been formed, and a Union of Unions had been established, with a central committee vested with power to issue orders to

all affiliated members. This organization swiftly converted strikes that began with economic demands into political strikes of interest to more than one class.¹⁰

The strike started, perhaps prematurely, in October, 1905, in the ranks of the bakers and the compositors in the print shops and newspapers. Among the workers' demands was the eight-hour day, but within a few days it became clear that one of the strike's main objects was participation by the workers in the election of the new Duma.¹¹ As hitherto, a strong minority of the workers did not desire to strike, but bands of strikers (as proposed by Trotsky in his plan of a revolutionary general strike) marched from workshop to workshop, turning out the workers into the streets. A majority of the plants thus were compelled to join the demonstration. The Moscow tramways ceased to run, thus adding to the difficulties of those who wanted to work.¹² The employers met and refused to consider the workers' demands as long as the strike lasted.¹³

The strike epidemic now spread to other areas. Under the incitement of the Social Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats (the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks had not at that time split their ranks, though there was some bitter feeling between the two views), strikes broke out in Saratov, Kiev, Kharkov, and Warsaw. A three-day sympathy strike with the printers took place in St. Petersburg. Sviet appeared and was threatened by the strikers with destruction of its offices. The government's Official Messenger also appeared. Otherwise there were no newspapers.¹⁴ Then came the critical blow, which made the political strike irresistible. The Empire's rail workers quit their jobs. Trains were stalled at any point on the route that their staff and crew decided.¹⁵ Some contemporary writers held that the strike was "spontaneous." It is doubtful if the influence of the revolutionary parties was as little as that implies. At least the rail strike began in Moscow, and that, with St. Petersburg, was probably the most affected area of the country. The Moscow rail workers' union, in addition to its call for a general strike on all the lines, passed a resolution demanding universal suffrage, political freedom, the right to organize strikes, the eight-hour day, the abolition of martial law on the railroads, the release of all arrested strikers, and amnesty for political prisoners.¹⁶

The reception of this group of demands merely aggravated the rebellion. Count Witte asserted to a workers' deputation

that not a single cultivated man in the whole world was in favor of universal suffrage.¹⁷ By October 29, all over the Empire trains ceased to run; tram-drivers quit; newspapers failed to appear; no mails were received or delivered; even telegrams were gravely delayed; schools were closed; water and gas supplies ceased. The streets were filled with strikers passing from place to place forcing the closing of plants or shops where work was still going on. Food was getting scarcer and prices were out of reach. Said the London Times correspondent: "The nation is still in passive revolt, and the government is incapable of enforcing even the semblance of authority.... Russia today is the scene of a phenomenon unprecedented in history, a nation on strike."¹⁸

Russian Poland and Finland followed suit with complete general strikes.¹⁹ By a vote of fifty to two the St. Petersburg justices of the peace refused their services, thus joining the medical men and the attorneys. The last straw was the strike of the telephone operators at the Winter Palace.²⁰ On the afternoon of October 30, 1905, the Czar signed a proclamation giving a constitution to the Russian people. Among its liberties was the power granted to the Duma that no law would be enforceable without its approval.²¹ The promised constitution came too late for the workers and the revolutionaries, but the police, the military, and the reactionary parties were aghast at the apparent loss of their own power which the constitution implied. Their reaction was to become neutral, or even to aid the "Black Hundreds" who took to rioting and to savage massacres of the Jews. When the Czar gave the constitution he did not recall power from the police and the military. The gift of liberty rapidly showed up for what it was — a gift under duress.

As the great strike developed, a significant new institution was established in St. Petersburg — the Soviet or Council of Workers' Delegates. The core of the Soviet came from the printers, but these were soon joined by delegates from other trades. Its first meeting took place on October 26; almost immediately it gained great authority as the first elective body that represented the voteless workers.²² Trotsky, who had returned from hiding in Finland, joined the St. Petersburg Soviet about the twenty-eighth of October. He rapidly became a recognized leader of the Delegates. When, therefore, the constitution was announced, he took it to the Soviet and warned his audience that it was only a "scrap of paper" that would shortly

be taken away again from the Russian people.²³

The London Times representative, describing the mass demonstrations that followed the victory of the constitution, shows how evident was the revolutionary spirit behind the strike:

The remarkable feature about the revolutionary gathering was its perfect organization. All the revolutionaries were formed into companies with officers. There were also four Red Cross detachments.... The ranks were filled with the most heterogeneous assemblage imaginable. Young and old, rich and poor, students and workmen, priests and outcasts, all wore a brave and hopeful look as they sang of the days when their country would be rid of the oppressor and when the poor would have bread.... The speeches... may be summarized in one word, defiance, defiance in a pacific form, but the political strike to be followed, when the due time comes, by recourse to arms.²⁴

Thus did the economic general strike change within a few days not only to the political form, but by inevitable logic to an insurrectionary movement. The strike committee decided to follow Trotsky's advice and call off the strike in St. Petersburg on November 3.²⁵ It was to be called into being again if the workers' demands were not granted. A secretly printed bulletin of the Council of Workers' Delegates carried the following statement: "We have freedom of meeting, but our meetings are surrounded by troops. Freedom of speech is given, but the censorship remains. Freedom of learning is given, but the University is occupied by troops. Inviolability of person is given, but the prisons are filled with the arrested.... A Constitution is given, but the Autocracy remains. All is given and nothing is given."²⁶ Now came the test of the Council of Workers' Delegates. Should the rail strike be prolonged to help the Finns in their struggle for liberty from the Czar? The final answer was negative. The plight of the Russian rail workers was desperate, terrible distress prevailing among the strikers. Some of their demands, however, had been met by Count Witte.²⁷

Having apparently won so much by direct action of the general strike, the Workers' Council in St. Petersburg sought to win the eight-hour day by ordering the workers to perform their eight hours of work, and then promptly and in disciplined order to leave the plants. This the workers did on November 13. At

once dismissals and lockouts followed. In protest the Soviet, or Council, voted for another general strike for November 15.²⁸ Now, however, the middle classes did not join in, nor did the unorganized, and two days later the Soviet was compelled by the logic of circumstances and the strike-weariness of the workers to rescind the strike order. When the workers sought their old jobs they found the issue of the eight-hour day still blocking the way with a lockout. The Soviet ultimately had to allow each workshop and plant to make the best settlement possible. The element that affected the middle classes in the November 15 strike call was the inclusion in the Soviet's demand of amnesty to the Kronstadt mutineers. This had a devastating effect upon the morale of the garrisons, from the view of the military and the more conservative of the middle classes. In this second general strike many managers held that barely 20 per cent of their workers wanted to take part, but that intimidation compelled the rest to walk out.²⁹ In the provinces the strike call was not answered, and at Moscow the rail workers refused to strike. In St. Petersburg the strike dragged on until the twentieth of November, when the Council decided that more important was the preservation of the workers' strength for decisive action — meaning armed rebellion.³⁰

A general strike cannot continue indefinitely. The more complete it is, the more deadly is its effect upon those who participate. It is little less than folly to expect success in a general strike if it follows swiftly after another. The November strike in Russia in 1905 was an example of a weapon blunted by too frequent use, utilized against a government determined to practice the utmost possible repression, now that most of the revolutionary leaders were under arrest.

By December, 1905, the Czar's government began to feel more confident, and made plans to apprehend the ringleaders of the St. Petersburg Soviet. On the sixteenth the entire executive committee was arrested as the Council, under Trotsky's chairmanship, was about to vote for still another general strike, in protest against the seizure of its leaders. At noon on the twentieth the strike broke out, this time in Moscow, where the strikers were armed, and where vigorous methods were taken to enforce the cessation of work. In St. Petersburg the wholesale arrests of their leaders merely embittered the strikers. Over 100,000 appeared on the streets, and as the spirit and methods of the workers became more and more revolutionary,

the demands grew, and to them were added the grievances of the army and the navy. The inevitable end, in cities like Moscow, was the confinement of the strikers to a workers' section of the city and a savagely destructive bombardment of that section by artillery.³¹

So closed the year 1905, a year of general strikes which started as economic and ended as starkly insurrectionary.³² The grave error of the Soviets of Workers' Delegates was the public announcement that the strikers would be increasingly well-armed, and that insurrection was their final aim. This warning brought fear to the many middle-class citizens who had been considerably in sympathy with the workers at the outset, and above all it gave notice to the government to gather its own armed forces with one hand, while with the other it was buying time by its concessions to the striking masses. The failure of the insurrection rested in the fact that the majority of the troops were still loyal to the government, something not true in the fall of 1917, when the Bolshevik revolution took place.³³ In 1905 large numbers of the urban workers were about ready for active rebellion, but it was 1906 before the peasants were similarly ready – too late for the urban revolution, which had been brutally and completely crushed. Moreover, the revolutionary workers in 1905 seem to have seized some strategic points and then to have waited until attack was made upon them, instead of advancing from one point of vantage after another. The leaders of the Bolshevik revolt of 1917, on the contrary, when the time came to rise in armed force, did not hesitate to take vital step after vital step, completely indifferent to whether they constituted the majority of the nation, or even of the forces of revolution.³⁴

It is significant that the last call for a general strike in support of the Bolsheviks came in August, 1917, and then only a one-day demonstration against the temporary resurgence of power of the counter-revolutionary forces. The final revolution saw no call for a general strike. The time for that weapon was past, and the assurance of success of the Bolshevik "putsch" in the minds of Lenin and Trotsky was so strong that to call a general strike would have been to gild the lily.³⁵ Once the Communists have possession of a people's government, a general strike is no longer desired or even permissible.

The German Spartacists

The chapter on general strike trends indicates wide division of opinion in European labor movements concerning its usefulness. In the first five years of the present century general strikes in Belgium, Sweden, Holland, and Russia had brought vividly to attention and prolonged discussion the wisdom and the practicality of that method of protest. It was recognized that too frequent or frivolous general strikes brought defeat and damage to the labor movement. In Germany in 1905 most trade union leaders held that a general strike was a needless disturbance of normal and organic trade union development. It is not surprising, therefore, that the German Trade Union Congress held in Cologne in May, 1905, overwhelmingly rejected the mass strike,³⁶ yet the Jena Congress of the German Social Democratic party, held in the fall, just as overwhelmingly voted for "the most comprehensive application of the general refusal to work," if any civil or labor rights should be put in peril by the German government.³⁷

The Russian revolutionary general strike of October, 1905 (see above), stirred great excitement in German labor ranks. Many saw with satisfaction the inclusion of the "class strike" in the workers' arsenal. After a while, however, a reaction set in. What seemed at first sight an excellent new weapon for labor became, as men thought it over, most untimely propaganda for revolution, and German workers were far less eager for revolution than were the sons of peasants in the new industrial centers of Russia. In Germany the Social Democrats' left wing — Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Kautsky and others — followed with intense interest the Russian and Polish efforts at revolutionary general strikes in 1905. Kautsky saw that, if the political strike was to be used against the German government, the Social Democratic party must be prepared to face the consequences and seize power. To him the revolutionary logic of the general strike was quite evident.³⁸

Kautsky showed how hostile was the German Socialist attitude to any concept of a "class strike" such as was advocated by the French syndicalists, by declaring in the Stuttgart International Congress of 1907: "The resolution of the French comrades is unacceptable to us. First because it presents a general strike as a means of acquiring power in the labor-union struggle, while the German comrades regard it as only a fundamental weapon in the political struggle. . . . The general strike

must not be regarded as a means of economic struggle."39 The German critics disapproved of the weapon for economic purposes, held it a last resort as a political tool, but ignored the revolutionary strike, unless the international general strike to prevent war could be thought of as essentially a revolutionary one. Bebel and Bernstein both felt it wrong to use the mass strike for the enforcement of an aim to which the majority was hostile. Liebknecht and Luxemburg both held that there would never have been a general strike if workers had waited until the majority desired it.40

With the outbreak of World War I few indeed of the labor leaders were ready to oppose the war by such action as a national walkout. A small but growing section, however, under Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg opposed war credits, advocated the general strike against war, and in 1916 began to publish a secret Bolshevik sheet called Spartacus. They were in close touch with Lenin, Trotsky and Radek, then political exiles in Switzerland. The great mass of the Social Democrats gave this radical group no support, and only a small minority joined the Independent Social Democrats, the left wing of non-Communist socialists. Both of the Spartacist leaders were imprisoned in 1916 and released with the outbreak of the German Revolution in 1918.41

The success of the Russian Bolsheviks in seizing power through the Soviets in November, 1917, stirred the Spartacists and the Independent Social Democrats to their depths, but it found the Majority Social Democrats in Germany distinctly hostile to any "proletarian dictatorship." In the first two months of 1918 munitions strikes almost reached the scale of a revolution. The Majority Social Democrats always seized the reins in such a crisis and managed to control what might otherwise have been a mass rising. And they did this more than once by calling a general strike, as will be shown.

When the debacle of German arms finally occurred, it came so swiftly that the organized workers of Germany, whether in the unions or in the Social Democrat party, were unready to take over. Power "fell out of the hands of the ruling classes in Germany, not because the masses were ready or even anxious to take that power, but because the old regime was exhausted...."42 The declaration of a German Republic, the abdication of the dynasty, naval mutinies in Wilhelmshaven, Kiel and Hamburg, and a general strike among civilian workers

occurred almost simultaneously.⁴³ Gustav Noske, who loomed large in the Kapp-Putsch and was accustomed to handling masses of strikers, was delegated to investigate the naval mutinies. He treated the mutinous sailors as just another kind of strikers. The naval authorities supported Social Democrat Noske, and the latter recommended that all the demands of the Sailors' Council, already in full control, be granted. Noske remained as Governor of Kiel until he was called upon to organize an armed force for the protection of the new Republic, and was appointed Minister of National Defense.⁴⁴

The only party actively agitating for revolution was the Spartacist group. The small Independent Social Democrat party sought an all-Socialist government, whereas the Majority Social Democrats wanted no break with the bourgeois parties, for they did not enjoy the thought of picking up the pieces of the German Empire. Events moved so fast, however, that the Majority were compelled to threaten the withdrawal of their own members from the new government of Prince Max of Baden unless the Kaiser and the Crown Prince were forced to abdicate. As late as November 6 the Vorwärts (organ of the Majority Social Democrats) warned its readers against the Russian methods and revolution. As it was, the revolution started even as the Kaiser agreed to abdicate. That day, Saturday, November 9, 1915, the workers ceased work "spontaneously." At one o'clock the same day the following fly-sheet was issued from the office of Vorwärts:

GENERAL STRIKE. The Workers' and Soldiers' Council of Berlin has decided to call the General Strike. All factories are to stop. The necessary feeding of the population will continue. A large part of the garrison has put itself at the disposal of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council in units armed with machine guns and rifles. The movement is to be led jointly by the Social-Democratic Party of Germany and the Independent Party. Workers and soldiers! See to it that quiet and order are maintained! Long Live the Socialist Republic!⁴⁵

The Workers' and Soldiers' Council

How swiftly the Majority Social Democrats got control of the situation can be seen in a second fly sheet issued the same afternoon in Berlin announcing the success of the "revolution."

Reporting the abdication of the Emperor and Crown Prince, the notice continued: "The victory of the people has been won; it must not be dishonored by thoughtlessness. Economic life and transport must be maintained at all costs. . . . Obey all the recommendations of the people's government and its representatives. It is acting in the closest union with the workers and soldiers. . . ." The signatories of this second sheet were two: "The Executive of the Social-Democracy of Germany. The Workers' and Soldiers' Council."46

"Spontaneous" as the action for the general strike was alleged to be, in reality the Spartacists were behind it. They discovered early that a successful general strike required the full cooperation of the trade unions. This cooperation was seldom forthcoming, for trade union officials were most influenced by the Majority Social Democrats. Union leaders seem to have been instructed on November 8 to keep their members in the factories and to have nothing to do with the strikes. Proclamations to that effect probably reduced the chances at that period of a full-blown general strike.

Chancellor Ebert, later to become President of Germany, issued a personal statement concerning his efforts to form a people's government: "The political revolution must not disturb the feeding of the population. . . . whoever interferes with the supplies of food or other objects of necessity, or with the means of transport necessary to their distribution commits the heaviest sin against the community. Fellow citizens! I beg you all most earnestly; Leave the streets. See that peace and order are maintained."47 (Italics added.) Rosa Luxemburg, Spartacist leader, feared that the German military collapse would not arrive in time to save the Russian Revolution of 1917. On the day that Hindenberg and Ludendorff demanded that immediate peace be made, October 1, 1918, the German Spartacus League held a conference in which it was agreed to intensify the agitation among the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils. A month later the German front collapsed and the navy mutinied. Liebknecht, and, later, Luxemburg, were released from prison. The former was co-opted into the Shop Stewards' organization.48 Liebknecht had refused a seat in the coalition government, preferring to work furiously with Luxemburg and Radek, Russian Soviet representative, to have a Soviet dictatorship of Germany proclaimed on the spot. December 1 saw a national executive committee of the Soviets (Councils of Workers and

Soldiers) established. Since the Councils excluded any middle- or upper-class individuals, this kind of organization was highly acceptable to the Spartacists as the nation's supreme authority. The Majority Social Democrats, on the contrary, held that all parties and classes should be included in a Republic, and that they were but trustees of the nation until a Constituent Assembly had been held. In mid-December a three-day session of the Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, held in Berlin, ended in reluctant agreement that the Constituent Assembly would express the will of the people and would meet January 19, 1919.

The Independent Social Democrats, desiring an all-Socialist government, called the decision "social treachery," and left the government when it used troops against the armed forces of the Spartacists.⁴⁹ Early in January the Spartacists and the Ebert government both toyed with the use of the general strike, for reasons that follow. The Ebert government held that the revolution had ended when it and the Majority Social Democrats came to power. The Spartacists contended that revolution could not be complete until the proletariat was in command, as in November, 1917, in Russia. For the moment the two camps were gathered in the streets, and the Spartacists in reality had the edge in numerical support, to the surprise of their own leaders. The Manchester Guardian vividly described the excitement and tension arising from the double call for a general strike. The Ebert government hoped that the massed strikers in the streets would overawe the Spartacists and their followers.⁵⁰ Monday, January 6, 1919, saw shops closed and all work at a standstill. Vast crowds increased hourly. Women and children as well as armed and unarmed soldiers thronged the streets, carrying posters declaring their stand. The government's supporters clamored for arms. When Noske demanded action on the matter of armed force, the burden was placed upon him. Made commander-in-chief, he organized in a Berlin suburb six corps of volunteer rifles, foot and horse, under command of General von Lütwitz, a Prussian of the old school and a participant in the abortive Kapp-Putsch of 1920.⁵¹

Noske, who had mingled with the huge crowds of Spartacist supporters, reported later that, if the throng had possessed determined leaders with clearly defined aims, Berlin would have fallen into their hands. Feverishly the mobs waited in the fog and cold, arms in their hands. But no word or deed of

leadership was forthcoming, since the leaders were within doors furiously debating action. Finally, rumors spread that the Ebert government had been displaced by the Liebknecht group.⁵²

The tragic story of the attempted revolution led by the Spartacists, their ultimate complete overthrow, and the brutal death of their leaders, Liebknecht and Luxemburg, does not concern this study.⁵³ In two short months the effort to bring about the "dictatorship of the proletariat" under the leadership of the German Communists had come to nothing. When the Constituent Assembly met in February at Weimar, a new government was formed, leaving all left-wing Socialists out in the cold. The radical members, even some of the Majority Social Democrats, gravely disturbed over the situation, made in March, 1919, a last effort to compel the government to keep its pledge to socialize the greater industries. Once again the weapon used was the general strike. The prelude was an unauthorized walk-out of the Berlin printers. Means of transportation in the city were paralyzed. On Tuesday, March 4, the entire industry of Berlin stood still, banks were closed, and stores shut. The demands of the strikers were plainly political, including the trial of the Hohenzollerns, Ludendorff and Hindenburg, together with Ebert and Noske.⁵⁴

Government troops occupied important buildings in Berlin. Spartacist leaders were arrested and their printing presses seized. On March 5 the German Federation of Labor, hitherto controlled by government socialists, declared itself favorable to the strike. That day the strikers' committee unwisely decided to extend the walkout to the electric, gas and water plants. This was fatal, because at that decision all Majority Social Democrat members of the strike committee resigned over what they deemed a criminal decision. From that moment the strike declined. Government troops were reinforced and modern weapons, from artillery to airplane bombing, were used. By Saturday, March 8, the defeat both of the general strike and of the attempted Spartacist revolution was complete. The strike carried the germs of its own defeat. "Lack of food became acute immediately; there were no local reserves, and the strike thus proved to be a strike against the strikers themselves."⁵⁵

The Revolutionary Strike in Spain

More than anything else it has been the failure of the ruling classes to provide honest government, or to show

the least regard for the complaints that cried to Heaven against them from the provinces, that has made Spain the classic land of insurrections.⁵⁶

In the history of the general strike, significant as were the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and the abortive insurrections of the German Spartacists in 1918-19, they were relatively simple and orderly when compared with the Spanish workers' reliance upon the mass strike and armed revolt in 1930-36. The Spanish peninsula can lay claim to having the most intricate, complex and tangled history of sympathy strikes for revolutionary purposes in any European area.

"In Spain every creed aspires to be totalitarian"⁵⁷ can be applied as aptly to social and economic creeds as to those in the field of religion. In part this can be explained by the geographical nature of the peninsula, with its varied regions virtually isolated by physical barriers, and in part it is due to differences in custom and traditional philosophy through the centuries. Spain seems to have found it hard to act as a national unity, particularly when experiencing a republican form of government. Perhaps the most striking example of the influence of ideology can be seen in Anarchism, philosophic and practical, rural and urban, which has controlled the life and thought of so many Spanish workers.

Spanish "Anarcho-Syndicalists," or, as they called themselves last century, "Anarchist-Collectivists," believe in the collective appropriation of social riches and the abolition of the State (whether capitalist or proletarian), with a fairly consistent boycott of the ballot, which they view as a mischievous tool apt to play into the hands of bureaucrats. At times a strong advocacy and practice of cooperation in agriculture and industry, with power in the hands of the working leaders of village or factory, has been an important element in their living. They suspect most forms of socialism in politics as destructive of all the above aims. They contend that Socialists in government are too apt to yield to red tape and "reformism," even if the government is all socialist and not a mixture of social classes. An inner contradiction of Anarchist belief is its aim to establish a condition of life where men would be completely free from compulsion, yet a willingness to use violence to bring about that goal. Another paradox is a readiness to use even bank robbery to obtain funds for the cause, but never to pay

salaries to their leaders or to follow leaders who achieve wealth. Finally – a critically important part of Anarchist philosophy – is belief in the general strike as the miracle that will bring about this ideal condition of freedom.⁵⁸

In the Spanish labor movement these anarchist principles have been inculcated for several generations, absorbing most of the energies of labor, in discussion or in practice. As early as 1873 a Barcelona anarchist journal declared itself in favor of a general strike as a means for the expropriation of property.⁵⁹ A year later, in Alcoy, some ten thousand strikers attempted to put this means to the test by seizing the town's archives and civic property registers, with the intention of setting up some sort of reconstructed society. This attempt, like many another in more recent times, ended in military suppression.⁶⁰

Two strikes early in this century are worth notice, both occurring in Barcelona. In 1902 the metal workers of that city demanded a nine-hour day. Their employers refused, and eight weeks of strike ensued, although there were thousands unemployed at the time. Finally, an appeal was made by the strikers to the other unions in the city and elsewhere to bring about a great sympathy strike. Almost unanimous approval of a mass strike was the outcome, though the Socialist party advised against it. By February 18, 1902, over 80,000 workers were on the streets of Barcelona; the ordinary life of the city was paralyzed. No trolley, omnibus or cab was visible; banks, shops, cafes, all were shut. Women with red flags had paraded the streets, compelling the stores to close. Servants on their way back from market were attacked by bands of strikers and robbed of their purchases. No newspapers appeared, and no goods were brought into the city. A scarcity of meat and bread soon became evident. The strikers seized the waterworks and gas plant, prevented the butchers from slaughtering, and robbed the bakeries.⁶¹ Until the first evening of the general strike the workers ruled the city. Then a state of siege was declared by the military, and the National Chamber of Deputies authorized the Spanish government to suspend constitutional guarantees for the whole province. Not for a week was there general resumption of work, despite the deaths of many strikers in conflict with police and military. The strike spread to other cities, but not to Madrid, where the Socialist party had the greatest number of members. These Socialist workers recognized that violent strike tactics would only weaken their movement.

Pablo Iglesias, leader of the Socialists at that time, made scathing comment on what the anarchists had done in Barcelona, gaining nothing but dead, injured, and imprisoned. Even the metal workers there won nothing through this sympathy strike.⁶²

The next great general strike to occur in Barcelona was a protest against the Spanish-Moroccan war and the calling of the reservists to the colors. A meeting of union delegates set the strike date as Monday, July 26, 1909. Agents were secretly sent to nearby villages to gain their support. Early that Monday morning groups of strikers went around the city closing down the workshops. By noon work had ceased. Strikers patrolled the streets, compelling stores to close. The police were unprepared. Martial law was declared, but Barcelona was already completely isolated. For once the strikers and the middle classes who desired a Catalanian Republic joined hands. Those whose intentions were limited to a peaceful general strike were quickly shown to be without influence. The Anarchists speedily gained the upper hand, and the Catalanian Republicans as rapidly faded out of the picture. Strict censorship caused wild rumors in the European press, but the London Times gave contemporary evidence that tales of murder and robbery of nuns and monks were grossly untrue, though church property was attacked.⁶³

There was no question that the Anarchists and the Catalanian Republicans expected wide support from other provinces. The strikers were seized with great confusion when they learned that the people of Madrid had not risen against the Moroccan war, and that the army had not mutinied. Among the scapegoats was Senor Ferrer, philosophic Anarchist and secular educator. His unconstitutional trial and swift death sentence was a cause of the subsequent fall of the contemporary Spanish ministry. This revolutionary general strike brought nothing but repression in its train.⁶⁴ Limitation of space permits mere mention of the three-day national strike of August, 1917 (Socialists and Anarchists), and the two-week relatively peaceful strike in Barcelona in February of 1919, organized by the Anarchists (C.N.T.). In both instances the military was called out against the strikers, bringing heavy casualties in the first instance, and thousands of arrests in the second.⁶⁵

During the seven years from 1923 to 1930 there were no Spanish general strikes to report. Dictator Primo de Rivera was in the saddle. But from the fall of the Dictator in

January, 1930, and the proclamation of the second Spanish Republic on April 4, 1931, until the outbreak of the civil war in 1936, an assortment of revolutionary strikes, general and otherwise, swept like a tidal wave over the nation. Few indeed of the strikes and hardly any of the general strikes were for simple economic demands.

From January, 1930, to April, 1931, King Alphonso did his utmost to keep the monarchy alive and functioning. The hopelessness of this effort became evident when Republican leaders of all stripes drew up the "Pact of San Sebastian," a compromise that had as a common aim the establishment of a Spanish Republic. General strikes of a day or so at the longest occurred with increasing frequency. They hit first one city, then another. June found them in Seville, Bilbao, Malaga and Granada; September, in Asturias and Galicia; November, Barcelona and Madrid itself. With December came the premature rebellion in Jaca of Captains Galan and Hernandez, promptly suppressed by the government, which turned the two young captains into national martyrs by swift death sentence. This Jaca group, and its failure with a declaration of martial law, had little or no effect on the wave of short general strikes which then covered northern Spain.⁶⁶ The government began to think and speak about the forthcoming general election, but the municipal elections came first, in April, and showed that the monarchists were heavily outnumbered in the cities. What this implied was seen in the sudden exile from Spain of the King and the royal family. The two largest cities, Madrid and Barcelona, were overwhelmingly for the Republic. The new Cortes was made up largely of left- and right-wing Republicans and Socialists. A new constitution was drawn up in which was included the separation of Church and State.

The autumn of 1931 seethed with work stoppages, preceded in July by a general strike in Seville, organized by the C. N. T., and a two-day walkout in Barcelona.⁶⁷ How tightly these short general strikes were linked with revolutionary purposes could be seen when the military insurrections of General Sanjurjo against the Republic broke out in Seville in the late summer of 1932. This general had made a name in Morocco, and was quite popular among the troops, but his effort to lead a rising against the Republic was swiftly defeated by government troops and by the declaration of a general strike.⁶⁸ Unrest was spreading widely in the country districts, while the Republicans

and Socialists were laboring grimly over the passing of an agrarian law that would divert some of the great landed estates to peasant use; but they disagreed fundamentally as to whether those lands should be made available to individual peasant farmers, or, as the Socialists contended, should be turned over to collectives (cooperatives).

The multitude of conflicting social and political creeds that divided the Spanish workers, the "disloyal" attitude of much of the military to the Republic, and the world depression with its dire effect upon the peasant and the unemployed factory workers, offered almost impossible problems for solution by the existing Cortes. Add to these the question of the political independence of Catalonia, containing Spain's second largest city, Barcelona. It is difficult to grasp the number of aspects which the Republican government of Spain had to face, and almost impossible to understand them unless one recognizes that the labor groups were struggling to find their way, painfully and crudely, from a Republic which was merely a middle-class government to one that was far nearer the Republic of the worker and the agrarian peasant.

Judging by the period between dictatorships (de Rivera to Franco), one might expect any event in Spain to bring forth an armed rising or a general strike, or, occasionally, both at the same time. Perhaps the strangest thing of all to an American was the anomaly of the city workers (Anarchists or Socialists) and the agrarian peasants fighting against and embarrassing their own government, which at least was a Republic, not a dictatorship nor an absolute monarchy. All through 1931 and 1932 the rural areas of Spain were in a constant ferment, stirred not only by the C. N. T., but by the socialist U. G. T. Few villages by that time were without a U. G. T. and a casa del pueblo. The Socialists were finally discovering the vast importance of the agricultural workers in the national picture, and were anxious that every possible pressure be exerted upon the Cortes to get effective land legislation passed. Their purpose was distinct from that of the C. N. T., which desired immediate revolution. 69

When the November elections of 1933 took place, there were still nearly three years to go before the outbreak of civil war. The Socialists went into the election with several black marks against them in the eyes of the Spanish workers. They had participated in the Republican government, yet their agrarian and

industrial legislation had seldom been enforced, or liked by the Anarchists when it was enforced. The C.N.T. virtually boycotted this election. A new election policy gave the Right parties twice as many seats in the new Cortes as the Left groups, though the votes cast for the latter were more than those cast for the Right-wingers. The new government (Center and Right) rapidly repealed most of the legislation favorable to industrial workers and rural peasants. Laws that were not repealed were allowed to lapse. Yet "disloyal" generals (such as Sanjurjo) were given protection by the Amnesty Bill. The trend toward reaction was such that the members of the C.N.T. now felt the time ripe for revolt. Instructions were issued for a social revolution, with general strikes in those areas where actual insurrection was not possible. The uprising of December, 1933, was swiftly crushed by army and police. Yet within three months there broke out a four-week general strike in Saragossa in protest against the treatment of prisoners taken in the December insurrection. So grim was that general strike that children of strikers were sent to other cities, as they had been in the 1912 textile strike in Massachusetts.⁷⁰

The swing of government to Center and Right did not clear the situation. General strikes came so fast and so furiously that one might have expected complete exhaustion of strikers and public. In June, 1934, a general strike was called to compel landlords to observe the laws set up by the last Cortes. Both C.N.T. and U.G.T. took part. Peasant harvesters in fifteen provinces dropped their tools, but after nine days the famished strikers returned.⁷¹ Still another change of government brought forth a combination of widespread general strikes called by the U.G.T., and actual armed outbreaks in Catalonia, Madrid and Asturias. In Catalonia the struggle was mainly one of middle-class politics, in which the members of the C.N.T. barely took part. This abstention in the very heart of the C.N.T. meant inevitable defeat. (The rural workers, exhausted from the long struggle in June, took no part.) The miners in Asturias were quite another story. Theirs was not just a revolutionary strike, but an armed insurrection, met in its turn by savagery of unbelievable ferocity on the part of the Moorish brigades who had been brought into Spain by Franco to suppress the rising.⁷²

The last year of the Spanish Republic before the outbreak of civil war provided a welter of revolutionary general strikes.

In the period between the General Election, February 1936 (again a swing to the Left), and the civil war in July, there were said to have been over a hundred and ten general strikes. The last month was by far the worst for such occurrences. It was evident to all that the military were planning definite armed revolt, and that Fascist and Nazi influences were rapidly gaining strength in Spain. During that period of extremes the Falange and the Communists both rapidly increased their membership. The Communists by powerful propaganda, by funds and by flattery, succeeded in infiltrating the U.G.T. As one outcome, the Socialist Youth was merged with the much smaller Communists' Youth Movement. 73

In July, 1936, the Spanish civil war officially started with an armed rising of the Military Junta supported by a group of Right-wing politicians. The Military "rebels" expected to possess the whole of Spain in a few short days, but found an amazing resistance from the people themselves, though of armed might the Republican government had little — a small air force, the Republican Assault Guards, and loyal naval ratings. While this is no place to discuss the civil war and the final accession of Franco to power as Dictator, the author is of the opinion that the struggle was less a civil war than an intervention of foreign armed forces and influences trying out the terrain for the second World War, which shortly followed.

March, 1939, saw the end of Spanish Republican resistance and the submission to Franco. For eight years no sign of a general strike or incipient insurrection stirred the waters of the Franco Directorate. Then, out of the blue, came the following Associated Press item:

Bilbao, Spain. (AP) Generalissimo Francisco Franco's government appeared yesterday to have crushed a general strike which virtually immobilized the vital steel industry in this area for eight days — the strongest demonstration by Spanish industrial workers since the civil war.

Most workers have returned to their jobs, penalized by loss of seniority and wage reductions, and informed sources here...calculated that 30,000 out of an estimated 45,000 workers in steel, heavy machinery, shipbuilding, mines and construction stayed away from their jobs Monday and Tuesday.... 75

This demonstration was the outcome of a celebration of Europe's May Day. The Resistance Council, underground representative of the three labor groups – U.G.T., C.N.T., and the Basque Workers' Solidarity (Catholic) – ordered the day-long work stoppage in the province. It was not an economic strike, but a political demonstration of solidarity against the Franco regime. By May 5, 14,000 May Day strikers had been dismissed and many arrests had been made. Two days later the strike had spread to 40,000 in the heavy industries, 7,000 in building and transport, 5,000 bakery workers, and 10,000 in various other trades. The government requisitioned the taxis and sent the bakers to work from their homes, then in the ensuing days shuttled them between the jail and the bakeries. Employer and striker pressure on the government ended in a marked lightening of penalties. There was an absence of violence in the strike. The Catholic Commonweal commented on the rising: "The strike was so widespread, and with the backing of many employers and the general public, that it shows unmistakably that in the Basque country, at least, the people are united in their opposition to General Franco. . . . even a tyranny that controls jobs, food, press, radio, the army and every repressive tool can be successfully defied. . . ." In short, the strikers scored in a way that observers here (Bilbao) had not believed possible in defiance of the iron-fisted Franco police system."⁷⁶

The lesson of 1947 was not too well learned by the Spanish Dictator, for on Monday, March 12, 1951, Barcelona, the largest industrial city in Spain, experienced a general strike. Taxis disappeared from the streets, shops and restaurants were closed, and some 250,000 factory workers quit work. Nearby towns with large textile mills were also affected.

Individuals as varied as militant members of the Falange, foreign business men and proprietors of the factories affected. . . expressed their approval of the movement. . . . The Government's action in dismissing the whole thing as the result of a Communist plot engineered from outside Spain has served chiefly to irritate the public still further because the people feel it is an effort to ignore their protest. . . . The strike had a revolutionary character in that nobody made specific demands for shorter working hours or better wages. . . . it was a general protest against the entire economic position of the country.⁷⁷

Brewer of the N. Y. Times, quoted above, concluded that it was not Communist organized, as no effort was made to seize strategic parts of the city, nor were essential city services cut off. There was, however, general recognition that even the skilled worker could not earn enough daily to keep his family fed when his buying power was but half what it had been fifteen years earlier.⁷⁸

The original order to employers from the government included a penalty of automatic dismissal for all who went on strike. This penalty was modified later, as was the loss of pay. Workers were informed that overtime would be permitted in order that such a loss could be made up. In addition, the civil governor was dismissed by Franco. Mr. Brewer declared in his dispatches to the N. Y. Times that much of the spirit that was rife in 1930 when the previous Dictator, Primo de Rivera, fell from power, was again present in Catalonia, despite the general calm shown during the actual strike, but that no one desired to return to the sufferings of the Civil War period.⁷⁹ That he was not far from the facts was evident when more industrial trouble occurred in the Basque region (Bilbao), late in April, 1951. This was a strike against the rising cost of living, and involved a quarter of a million workers. In May of the same year a strike in Pamplona, capital city of mountainous Navarre (between the Basque territory and Barcelona) protested the same rising living costs. Angry crowds stoned the food ration headquarters, and flying squads of strikers went from factory to factory, pulling out the workers, just as in the old days of the Spanish Republic.⁸⁰ A repeat performance, in April, 1956, affected Pamplona and extended to certain Basque industrial centers.

In Latin America

If it is hard in Spain for a worker to distinguish between a revolutionary general strike and an armed insurrection, in most Latin American nations it is even more difficult. Organization of labor in Latin America is a social phenomenon of this century. Agriculture is still the main field of employment, though the two world wars have hastened the industrialization of Central and South America. Where industrialization has taken hold it has usually been in relatively small units, and much of it has been based upon foreign capital.

Social legislation is comparatively recent in Latin America,

yet as far as the labor code goes it is often ahead of practice in other continents. What enforcement of the labor code has occurred in the varied Latin American nations has largely been due to pressure from recently organized labor, or a product of native national politics contending with foreign capital. Inasmuch as agricultural products and raw materials, such as meat, coffee, wheat, tin, oil and nitrates, have to compete in an international market, the enforcement or even establishment of social legislation to protect rural labor is rare, and where it occurs it is fought hard by the native landowners.⁸¹

General strikes, therefore, in Latin America affect a minority of the working masses, so far as quitting work is concerned, and those workers in the main are found in cities or working on transportation and communications facilities. When the industrial and transportation workers, with a fringe of personal service workers, such as waiters or barbers, go into the streets as they quit work, demonstrations can and do rapidly change into riotous behavior and even armed insurrection. An economic general strike, strictly defined, is far less common than in Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian countries. It has seemed best, therefore, in this part of the book, to refer to only two of the Latin American lands in connection with at least incipient revolutionary general strikes, and to leave the rest of the countries which have experienced some kind of general strike to the Appendix, where thumbnail sketches of them will be found.

The confused and conflicting strains of ideology in Spain have had considerable effect upon the Latin American labor movements. In the more advanced groups one could find Anarchists, Syndicalists, Reformists and Communists, as in the Argentine and Uruguay. In some instances there were also the concepts and influence of the Industrial Workers of the World (generally claimed by the United States), and of the Catholic unions, as in Chile. A native combination of philosophies, European and otherwise, is found in APRA or the Aprista party, particularly in Peru, with its personal center in Haya de la Torre.

In the Argentine

A serious revolutionary general strike took place in 1919 in Argentina. There the influence of Barcelona Anarchists was still strong, though they had fled to the Argentine in 1909, at the time when Spain had executed Senor Ferrer. FORA, the

largest labor organization in the Argentine, was entirely controlled by Anarchists, who stressed in theory and practice the importance of revolutionary mass action by labor.

A serious railroad strike, with much sabotage and train-wrecking, had already dragged on for months in 1918, but had finally been settled by President Irigoyen, who insisted that foreign-owned railroads should give labor the same conditions which they were receiving from the government in the nationally owned railroads.

Late in 1918 the steel workers at the British controlled Vasena Iron Works walked out, and shortly thereafter the strikers tried to attack strikebreakers. Police fired into the crowd and killed four persons. Residents of the neighborhood, largely workers, left their jobs in unanimous protest. La Protesta, Anarchist organ of FORA, called for an instant general strike, revolution, and the occupation of the factories by labor. On May 9, when the police victims were buried, Buenos Aires was at a standstill, with violence and property damage. Only the free use of machine guns enabled the government to gain control. The strike was called off on May 11, with many concessions from the Vasena Company and the pardon of arrested workers. Even so, FORA had more difficulty in getting the strikers back to work than it had had in bringing them out. Something like a thousand persons were killed in the riots, and it is doubtful if any gains of a revolutionary character were made by FORA. 82

Further attempts in Argentina occurred in 1920, 1921, and 1923. The 1920 strike was the outcome of conflict within FORA which played into the hands of agents provocateurs, and achieved nothing. The two later strikes were what the Syndicalists called "revolutionary gymnastics," rather than real general strikes. In October, 1930, a general strike fiasco led to the creation of the Argentine Civil Legion, formed of groups of twenty civilians in all parts of the capital city. Each group was under command of a captain, as in the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand in Winnipeg in 1919. This organization was established to give the new government of General Uriburu (who had ousted President Irigoyen in a "conservative" revolution in 1930) citizen support in case of an emergency — which evidently meant a revolutionary strike or an armed putsch. 83

The contemporary use of the general strike to put a dictator into office, or to keep him there against the pressure of the other interests in the country affected, can be seen rather

clearly in the rise to power of Colonel Juan Perón. The army coup d'état that ultimately led to Perón's dictatorship occurred in June of 1943. The new military government aimed to destroy the independent labor movement. It has been said that, like the German and Italian governments, the Colonels' regime was given to closing union headquarters, taking their funds, exiling their spokesmen "to concentration camps in the south, and replacing them with counterfeit 'labor men.'"⁸⁴ Communist-oriented leaders attempted a general strike in February, 1944, in protest against the Nazi element in the new Argentine military government; but the strike call, coming from the Communists, received little support, and was looked upon as premature by responsible labor leaders. At the outset of the Colonels' regime, Colonel Perón held the obscure position of Secretary of Labor and Social Security, established in November, 1943, with but one million pesos as appropriation. Within three years, however, he was spending fifty times that sum. His departmental officials were picked from his loyal followers. Long overdue social measures gained him considerable labor support. Typical of Perón's policy was his edict of December 20, 1945, announcing a general increase in pay for all workers (especially the "shirtless" or descamisados) ranging from ten to twenty-five per cent, together with a Christmas bonus amounting to one extra month of pay. Perón got the credit, and the employers had to pay the bill.

In October, 1945, before the announcement of this decree, Vice-President Perón apparently lost control of his position in President Farrell's government, and vanished from the scene for approximately a week. The enemies of Perón lost their chance at that moment to set up a government of their own choice, and the police and his labor organizations got him back into power. The police crushed all demonstrations against him, and favored those in his support. Perón's labor forces were stronger than people had guessed. They were better organized. He had exiled, arrested, or bought off most labor opposition. Where existing labor groups could not be won, pressured or eliminated, new unions were created; then decrees were issued allowing but one union in each craft or industry — the Perón one, of course. At this critical moment when his fate hung in the balance, the (Perónized) Confederation of Labor declared a general strike in protest against his opponents.

The N. Y. Times summed up the effect of the strike in

Buenos Aires: "The General Confederation of Labor, which is controlled by Colonel Perón through the Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare, succeeded in paralyzing all activities in Argentina today. This afternoon it would have been difficult to obtain even a flask of water...."85 The big strike demonstration was converted at the last moment from a protest against his "protective detention" to a wild celebration of satisfaction at his release and restoration to power. Many "insurgent" members of the Army and Navy who had gone on record against Perón in the few days of uncertainty were now clearly on their way out by resignation. Perón's bonus decree had no little effect in securing his election in 1946. Business and industry at first flatly refused to pay the decreed wage increases and the Christmas bonus. They declared it was illegal, unconstitutional, clearly designed to put the Vice-President into the office of the President at the expense of his enemies.

Business and industrial leaders warned the government that if their property was damaged as a penalty for their non-compliance they would resort to a nation-wide lockout. (Perón's paper, La Epoca, had already appealed to the workers "who had been defrauded of their rights.") On January 14, 1946, the threatened lockout began, with national economic paralysis as a possible result. Stores, groceries, bakeries, movie theaters were shut for three days; bars and restaurants were also closed. The Southern Pacific Mail of Valparaiso, Chile, reported the complete revolt of the army, whose under officers and noncommissioned men were "running the whole show and insisting on having Perón in power." In Buenos Aires ninety per cent of the establishments were closed. In the provinces mobs sacked factories and buildings because of the lockout. The Confederation of Labor, now completely Perón's tool, pledged its allegiance to his government. Significantly enough, his edict was denounced by the Socialist party, for the first and most serious sufferers from the lockout, as from a general strike, were the poorest elements of the nation. The N. Y. Times alleged: "The industrial interests in Argentina are making common cause with democrats and radicals against a fascist government...."86

The Confederation of Labor subsequently warned all citizens that "The C. G. T. henceforth will use its force in any terrain, to crush without consideration all who oppose the cause of the Justicialist Revolution which the workers have embraced." The Confederation of Labor, completely Perónized, stood ready

to fight for him and the "Justicialist Revolution" (a phrase invented by Perón to distinguish his dictatorship from others) with all its force, the revolutionary general strike, or armed mass demonstrations in the streets. Perhaps one should say counterrevolutionary strike. To most readers it may seem peculiar that Perón should attack the Catholic Church as savagely as he did in 1954-55. But in November of 1954 there was a broad hint of what was happening in a special wire to the N. Y. Times from Edward A. Morrow. President Perón made a nationally broadcast speech after a twelve-hour meeting with the highest provincial authorities and labor leaders. The Confederation had just decided to "halt Catholic infiltration into unions." No local was to allow priests to attend its meetings, so ruled the rail workers' union, hoping all others would follow suit. Evident fear of a Christian Democrat party, organized by the Church and aided by "Christian" trade unions, and what such a movement might do in the elections for President in 1958, was implied in Perón's speech and actions.⁸⁷

The Catholic Church was accused of burning the flag of the Argentine Republic. The Confederation of Labor promptly called a general strike for June 15, 1955, to "vindicate" the Argentine flag and the memory of Eva Perón. The strike was peaceful and the mass demonstration calm and orderly, unlike several earlier demonstrations in front of certain famous Catholic buildings. On the day of the general strike two Catholic prelates, born in Argentina, were hastily deported by airplane to Rome, on orders from Perón.⁸⁸

Things moved fast in Argentina. Between the general strike on June 15 and a month later, the Argentine government buildings were bombed by the navy "rebels" from the air, and the President was excommunicated by the Pope, but this was not reported in the Argentine press. Perón appeared to lose his power as dictator, and announced his desire to rule thenceforward as a constitutional President, having achieved all his "revolutionary" aims.⁸⁹ September 16, 1955, saw the end of Perón's regime and his flight to sanctuary in Paraguay, and thence to other South and Central American states. A threatened general strike on November 15 in protest against the new government of Argentina failed under joint pressure of the government's armed forces and the refusal of the workers in the public services to join the strike. Workers in the industries rapidly returned to work, upon which the Perónist leaders called off the strike.⁹⁰

Perón's flight for personal security to other Latin American nations did not mean an end to Perón-Argentinian relations. December, 1956, saw general strike threats sparked by Perónistic leaflets. September, 1957, brought with it a further twenty-four hour general strike call from sixty-four unions who favored Perón and opposed the new Frondizi government. The harbor of Buenos Aires was paralyzed and the government troops ran the buses. January, 1959, saw a showdown with Frondizi's government. The new President used the law to mobilize the key workers as army soldiers and therefore liable to martial law. At the same time, the strike early in 1959 virtually crippled municipal services; in short, "It shut down banks, silenced newspapers and halted industry and construction throughout the country."91

Denmark against the Nazis, 1944

On the last days of June, 1944, fourteen Danes were killed "rioting" against the Nazi occupation forces. Citizens of Copenhagen deliberately disobeyed and ignored the curfew, burned Hitler in effigy. There was also current a wave of sabotage for which eight more Danish partizans were executed. Copenhagen was paralyzed with a general strike in protest. The Nazis retaliated with the arrest of all Danish trade union leaders.

Stores, banks, telegraph offices, trolleys, telephones — all stopped on signal. The Copenhagen-Berlin plane did not fly. The Nazi radio resorted to records, not continuing its original program. Workers in all factories, whether in war goods or consumer goods, quit work. There were no morning papers, and the bakery employees went on strike. Most restaurants were closed.

The Nazis called all this "amazing Danish effrontery." Trucks loaded with German troops and police patrolled the streets, using machine guns. Special Nazi guards were placed around the arsenal and the factories. The Danes turned over trolley cars for barricades. The strike spread to the provinces. Some 18,000 "underground," equipped with machine guns, launched an attack on Copenhagen Nazis. The latter used tanks; occupied the railroad station, the City Hall and bridges. The Associated Press reported 700 killed or wounded. The Nazis requisitioned all private autos, as the railroads were immobilized. The Nazis' radio ceased entirely, probably from power shutoff. The inhabitants of Copenhagen continued to ignore the

curfew, and hung Allied flags from the trolley wires. Bonfires were made in the streets of Nazi literature and papers. The Stockholm press called the outbreak "the most effective nerve war" to which the Nazis had been exposed.

Desperately the Nazis tried more of the general strike medicine on the Danes. All food supplies to Copenhagen were blocked. Water, gas, and electric power were cut off. Any civilian approaching the city limits was shot on sight. The Nazis forced the Danes to use the last reserves of water (three small lakes in the city) to put out the fires in the streets. The German radio appealed to all workers to return. Warning was given that if the city did not quit the strike and the curfew disobedience it would be bombed. A hundred trade union leaders were threatened with execution if the struggle were not called off.

The Danes' answer was to push the strike, defy the bomb threat. Despite appeals from labor leaders and municipal authorities, the strike spread all over the mainland by July third, and factories stayed closed. Finally the Nazis yielded, pledging certain demands made by the Danish Freedom Council, which had been running the strike and the underground struggle. The Council called off the strike, and ordered the workers to return to their jobs on July fifth. Among the concessions pledged by the Nazis were:

Withdrawal of the Schalburg Corps (counter-sabotage).

Cancellation of the curfew requirements.

No reprisals on strikers.

Transportation system closed at 9:00 in place of 11:00, at request of the trolley men.

Fire not to be opened on crowds unless weapons were evident.

The N. Y. Times reported that twenty-two provincial towns joined in that general strike. If anything, the story of the Danish strike against the Nazis is more amazing than the quiet but equally courageous strike of the Dutch in 1943. The Danes had the advantage of another year of war and the near approach of the Allies, who less than two months later were to liberate Paris. 92

Hungary in 1956-57

As June 17, 1953, was to East Germany, and June 28, 1956, to Poland, so was October 23, 1956, to Hungary and its workers.

What started as a political and economic protest, largely by University students, ⁹³ before dusk on October 23 had become a wildly accelerating revolutionary movement of hitherto "loyal" Communist students and workers. Fed up with the savage Hungarian secret police (AVO), they confronted a swiftly shifting government of Gero, Nagy and Kadar, which was ready to make almost any economic or political pledges, but not to implement them.

Over against the puppet government stood the amazingly strong Budapest Central Workers' Council in close liaison with provincial workers' councils, with intellectuals, and with students and youth. This Council carried the burden of negotiation, first with the short-lived government of Imre Nagy, and then with the Soviet Kadar regime. It was this Council that organized support for the ten to sixteen points demanded by the American people, both by active fighting and by a general strike. ⁹⁴

How closely the general strike followed the revolution can be seen from the story of the struggle. Gero, before his flight from Hungary, had called for Russian tanks and soldiery. Among the Workers' Council demands was the immediate and peaceful departure of the Russian Soviet troops. One day after the massacre of workers and students in Parliament Square, October 25, Kadar and Premier Nagy pledged over the radio that Soviet troops would be withdrawn just as soon as order was achieved in Hungary. Within half an hour leaflets were being distributed on the streets calling for a general strike until the government accepted the demands of students and workers. ⁹⁵

The call to a general strike was signed by workers and students, and it was to last until the demands were granted and "the murderers called to account." These demands had been formulated on Tuesday, October 23, but had been refused publication by government officers. Among the demands were listed:

A national provisional government, to include insurgent youth.

Cancellation of martial law.

Denunciation of the Warsaw Agreement. The departure of the Russian troops from Hungary.

Political amnesty. Release of prisoners.

Disarming of the AVO. Order to be assured by the Hungarian Army.

Press freedom (including workers' newspapers). ⁹⁶

Until the last day or two of October the workers and the youth of Budapest and of Csepel Island (iron and steel plants) were in violent conflict with the AVO and Soviet tanks and army. The crude weapons used by the Hungarian revolutionaries ('Molotov cocktails') startled and discomfited the Soviet forces and the AVO, and amazed the world. Then the Russian forces withdrew from Budapest and appeared to be heading for their own frontier. At this point the AVO came in for further attention from the revolutionaries.

The Csepel workers were in the forefront of activity. In the first days they were the sinews of the attack on the Budapest (Soviet) radio station and the defense of the Kilian Barracks. When the Russians retired the Csepel men were leaders among the factories that formed the Workers' Councils throughout Hungary, and they offered to the Nagy government a general blueprint of the future Socialist, but non-Soviet, Hungary.⁹⁷

Then the Soviet forces rolled back into Budapest on November 4, and for seven days utter destruction rained upon the capital and many other lesser cities. John MacCormack of the *N. Y. Times* called it a "victory of 200,000 Soviet soldiers, equipped with some 5000 tanks."⁹⁸ Both Maleter and Nagy (leader of the Hungarian revolutionary forces and Prime Minister respectively) were caught in the same Soviet trap — an invitation to negotiate the issues. Both accepted the invitation, and both were captured by the Russians.⁹⁹ Thereafter Kadar became the Soviet puppet premier.

In the meantime the general strike called by the Workers' Councils appeared in the news columns only casually. Samples of this indication that the strike was running parallel to other forms of resistance are worth record:

Nov. 10: "A general strike which has paralyzed the capital is still in force." (A. P.) "Kadar's government continued to broadcast appeals for workers to end the general strike." (U. P.)

Nov. 12: "Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians wandered amid the wreckage of their capital, refusing work and ignoring the masses of Soviet armor and troops standing guard every few hundred yards." (Joint A. P., U. P., and Reuters from Budapest.)

Nov. 13: "At most industrial plants workers guarded the gates to prevent strike-breakers from entering." (A. P., Budapest.)

Nov. 14: "Kadar fired 12 Stalinists from top Party posts in

the vain hope of stopping the general strike, and of preventing workers in the gas, electric power and other utilities from joining the majority" on strike. (U.P., Budapest.)

On November 15 the Budapest Council of Workers (industrial) voted that the general strike be continued until free elections and independence of Moscow were granted by the Kadar government.¹⁰⁰ Labor leaders who had ordered a back-to-work movement were disowned by Budapest workers, and the latter determined to keep the strike going until Soviet troops were withdrawn and deportations of Hungarian youth ceased.¹⁰¹

These deportations of youthful students and workers greatly stiffened Hungarian resistance. The irony of it all was that most of the Freedom Fighters and of the general strike leaders were long-trained but bitterly disillusioned Communist party members. How closely they were supported by the ranks of Hungarian citizens can be seen from the fact that strikers were fed by farmers and city suppliers, inasmuch as they had received no pay from October 23. Americans reportedly were amazed to find that there was no black market in food.¹⁰²

Kadar and the Soviet leaders seemed incapable of learning what made the Hungarians resist. The Workers' Councils recognized that reassembly of labor in the plants would give workers a renewed sense of mutual support. No pay would be made while the strike lasted, and winter was adding to the workers' hardships. Hence a meeting was scheduled to be held in the vast Budapest Sports Palace to plan for the resumption of work; but Soviet tanks and Kadar's political police prevented members of the National Workers' Council from meeting. Enraged anew, the members of the Council clamped a new, official forty-eight-hour general strike on the city of Budapest. Kadar's radio admitted that it was effective. Only the food processing industry was exempt. The Council, moreover, demanded that Kadar recognize it as the only negotiating partner in dealings with labor.¹⁰³

On November 25 the Budapest Workers' Council, which had sponsored the forty-eight-hour strike, then advised labor to return to work for at least twenty-four hours, while the Council continued negotiation with Kadar for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the release of Imre Nagy.¹⁰⁴ Although strike leaders felt that to prolong the strike would weaken the workers rather than the Kadar government, the workers themselves were more than ever reluctant to return to work when Kadar was still

making provocative and unyielding speeches. In the meantime normal activity of provincial townsfolk was at a standstill, their citizens parading in their Sunday clothes.¹⁰⁵

By December 1 Hungarian labor leaders were urging workers to resume their "total strike" for another five to fifteen days, in protest against the "tough" policy of Kadar. To those readers who are likely to be somewhat confused by the "off again, on again" attitude of the Budapest Workers' Council, it may clarify the picture if the Vienna despatch of correspondent Ridley is remembered. He had stated that a "fifty per cent general strike" had lasted from October 23 to the date of his wire, December 9.

Kadar's government finally ordered the dissolution of all major Workers' Councils in Budapest and the provinces. Only individual plant Councils were permitted to continue. Kadar complained that the Budapest Central Workers' Council had "attempted to deal with political questions," and to build a new state power against that of Kadar.¹⁰⁶ In obedience to the call of the outlawed Workers' Councils, December 11 saw a "hundred per cent effective...total strike." Kadar government radio broadcasts admitted that this was the first time that Budapest's power had been cut off, and rail and highway transportation had come to a standstill. The United Press described this walkout as the most complete in general strike history.¹⁰⁷

The arrest of the president and vice-president of the Budapest Workers' Council at the end of the strike of December 11 and 12 resulted in a new wave of sitdown strikes. A Kadar Commission accompanied by Soviet soldiers took over the management of the struck factories, including the vast Csepel Island plants. The question was how the new management could get the labor force to produce. The manifold arrests and the Commissions which displaced the popularly elected workers' councils appeared to leave no one in authority among the strikers who could call off the general strike, even if they had so desired. The result was a continued general strike through December 15. The end came December 17, when the strike was officially called off by the Budapest Central Workers' Council, now "functioning illegally."¹⁰⁸

Despite Kadar's pledge to give individual plants' councils considerable share in factory management, in less than a month the Csepel Councils resigned in protest, and urged other Councils to do the same, since all vital decisions were being made

by Soviet officials. Needless to add, much violence followed this protest resignation. Workers were reported as storming the Communist (Kadar) headquarters on Csepel Island. 109

As is common after most general strikes, the government gradually restored the major pre-strike conditions. Under the plea that the unrest, strikes and violence were the product of "counterrevolutionaries," old "Stalinist" officials and police were reinstated. Furthermore, "production wages" were ordered to take the place of fixed wage rates. Then the government announced a new "Workers' Guard" to keep the rebel workers in order and to prevent strikes. The Guards' task included "maintenance of unhindered calm" among the workers, the attainment of smooth production, and the prevention of "counter-revolutionaries" regaining power. 110

Lest a new outbreak of fighting or striking should occur on the Hungarian national holiday, March 15, Kadar called in to Budapest Soviet tanks to add to the existing show of force. The Hungarian militia, the Workers' Guards and Soviet tanks together created a veritable state of siege. In addition, frontier guards were strengthened and hospitals cleared for possible emergency. But perhaps the heaviest blow to the Hungarians was the publication in the Budapest Kadar press of Polish Communist Premier Gomulka's statement that the Kadar program was the only way out of Hungary's difficulties. 111

Thus did one of the longest, most cold-blooded and determined of general strikes end in apparent failure, even though the great majority of Hungarian citizens gave it full support. That it called for even greater courage than the emotional military offense and defense of the physical revolution is evident, for each man in the strikers' groups became a man marked by the rejuvenated AVO, and could be sure that sooner or later they would get him for punishment, deportation or death.

Evaluation of the revolutionary general strikes in Hungary in 1956-57 is difficult indeed. 112 The deportation of Hungarians to Soviet Russia and the manifold executions throughout Hungary that followed the strikes and the abortive revolution indicate, perhaps, the most savage punishment of any general strike in history, not even ignoring the Ebert purge of militant workers after the Kapp-Putsch. And the end is not yet. On the other hand, no other action could have spoken to world Communism so incisively as this series of general strikes. Here was

irrefutable evidence that the rising was not engineered by the alleged "counterrevolutionaries," but rather by utterly disillusioned one-time loyal members of the Hungarian Communist party. Perhaps the most eloquent proof of this was the refusal by the majority of the French C.G.T. (Communist) members to obey the call of the Communist leaders to strike or demonstrate in support of the Soviet liquidation of the Hungarian rising. 113

PART III

THEORY

Chapter XV

SOCIAL HAZARDS OF THE GENERAL STRIKE

Now that the Communists have discovered the other side of the moon, this chapter may quite fittingly discuss the varied technological inventions of mankind over the past century by which the human community has been affected when faced with a general strike. Whatever affects the stability of current social customs is of interest to the average citizen – at least in certain crises of his life such as natural and mechanical disasters, wars, or general strikes.

From popular Stuart Chase to scholarly William Ogburn, the social scientists have recognized that since the Industrial Revolution science has placed society increasingly at the mercy of staffs of skilled technicians and operators.¹ This concentration of skills accompanies the development of the giant gadgets of applied science. Railroads, autos, airplanes, radio and television are all advances in comparison with a century ago. Of one fact we can be sure as the years pass: each new discovery will call for quicker and more fundamental adaptation of existing labor-management relations. Evidence of this is present in the extremely costly application of automation in the steel and auto industries. At the same time, the effective personnel is likely to grow smaller rather than larger in numbers. So it is reasonable enough to look at the future labor-industry relations of the world as they may appear when space-time stories and the factual news of science become even more closely akin than they are today.

As Ogburn and his colleagues show, it takes at least a quarter century for a technological invention to change culture patterns. The question of questions, "Will the general strike survive the Atomic Age?" can be met by surmise alone. Even so, there will still be many lesser queries as to the trend and fate of certain specific labor-management techniques, among them use of the mass picket (thousands of them) in San Francisco and Spartacist Germany, or Terre Haute, Indiana, Debs' home town; or industry's devastating counterattack in the Swedish lockout of 1909.

What the skilled workers must try to achieve is a balance in the worker's mind as to the effect in time which inventions

produce. In a general strike the element of time is vital. A community can meet the great strike crises with the aid of volunteers if the period of endurance is not too extreme. Winnipeg lasted six weeks, Seattle barely one. For labor itself time is a prime necessity, as one can guess from any modern general walkout that lasted longer than twenty-four hours. There is constant pressure on trade union leaders to call off a strike to save face and funds. All this bears upon the usefulness of Citizens' Committees for planning supplies, for control of permits, for emergency services, and for maintaining law and order.

Historically, Committees of Public Safety definitely found themselves during the active strain of the Swedish strike of 1909. They developed to a high pitch of preparatory training in the German Technische Nothilfe of 1919-21, and in the British O.M.S. of 1926. In Seattle the Minute Men infiltrated labor, business, and finance to such an extent that Kenneth MacGowan could speak of them as agents provocateurs, whose task it was to "get something on" the labor leaders. In Winnipeg a Committee of One Thousand took over the semiskilled jobs on the city and provincial governments, making it very evident that the strikers were not concerned to cooperate with the city authorities. Hence large civilian protective groups of over 3,000 men assumed the fire and hospital services and mail delivery, and acted as militia and police forces. "The existence and acts of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand hardened the spirit and resistance of the labor ranks...and in general prolonged the strike..."² Without the committee, however, the stricken city would have been at the mercy of the strikers. Winnipeg showed the world how stubborn and illogical such conflicts can be.

The custom of drawing upon a citizen body in a general strike to form active groups of a protective nature, while quite common, is not universal. A good deal depends on the virility and preparedness of the people and their leaders. Iceland, for example, had no Citizens' Committee. Not every large city in a general strike yields such powers. Some have an Industrial Association, as San Francisco, which in 1934 possessed no Citizens' Committee to spearhead the demands of the citizens. When the strike began, Mayor Rossi announced that he would immediately appoint a Committee of Five Hundred citizens to which all important questions relating to organization of the community could be referred, with authority to handle problems as they arose.³

A Citizens' Committee is more likely to develop when a city has had previous experience with the hazards of a general strike. It is not always a public gain, however, for some committees would really prefer a quick compromise to victory after a long and bitter struggle. The hardening of the industry-labor feelings is a likely accompaniment of such a victory, but gives less promise of early settlement. It must also be recorded that the direct and indirect costs of Citizens' Committees and their semiskilled services are often high. A great deal of damage was done to British railway rolling stock by the green hands who functioned as professionals during the days of actual strike. This is usually true alike of road and rail. It must be doubted if in the long run the Citizens' Committee can ever replace highly skilled workers on a job that is as short-lived as that of most general strikes. What such a committee contributes is time — time for the community to meet its problems without social collapse.

In addition to the difficulties described above, the peculiar position of the police services with reference to strikes creates a special hazard. The police, who ordinarily might be regarded as a citizens' committee on safety, may be found first on one side and then on the other. The issue here is exceedingly complex, owing to the numbers and kinds of police and their varying authorities. In the U.S.A. we are well acquainted with National Guardsmen, federal troops, and various local and traffic police, together with "company police," strikebreakers, and county sheriffs. Added to this complication is the great variety of reaction patterns on the part of the varied police staffs, creating one of the sorest spots in almost every general strike. In Terre Haute, for instance (1935), 3,000 pickets paraded the streets to prevent the invasion of 1,100 National Guardsmen. The city police — after forty-eight hours of gruelling duty — fired several hundred rounds of tear gas at the massed pickets, while the Guardsmen used their rifle butts and set up machine guns outside the plant that originally caused the strike. In an effort to start communications and protect the public, the Guardsmen rode on the buses, trolleys, and taxicabs, and patrolled the city, making many arrests under strict martial law.

In France around 1947, and in other parts of the Communist-controlled world, the pattern of police and troop relationship with labor included a disturbance on the picket line when one or more pickets would be shot, and at once a twenty-four-hour

general strike would be called by the Communists. This pattern was seen even in San Francisco, where the public funeral of the dead pickets created a great sensation. A much less bloody conflict between police and strikers occurred in the Rochester, New York, general strike of 1946. Again, the strike was one largely of conflict between pickets and city police. This time a police chief aggravated the issue by making arrests of over two hundred leaders of labor, the vast majority of whom had never been inside a jail before.

In part the complexity of the police problem is caused by the almost universal underpayment and overwork of police personnel. This renders the average member of any police force peculiarly vulnerable to bribery or disaffection in the critical period of a general strike. Such tentative disloyalty may well spread to the soldiers, especially if they have been drafted to duty. While the San Francisco National Guard in 1934 showed no sign of dissatisfaction with the government, in Winnipeg in 1919 there was evidence of real defection.

Intriguing instances of police ambivalence are not uncommon. Seattle police during the strike wore armbands and carried only night sticks, yet did their job well — to keep order within the ranks of labor. In Winnipeg the regular police sided with the strikers, even in the last street battles, and bitterly opposed the new police, many of whom were World War veterans. In the British strike, in many cities football games were staged between police and pickets. A most startling instance of split personality occurred in San Francisco, where pickets and police shared their lunch sandwiches, but turned with murderous violence to "holding that line" when official orders were issued.

Some light is thrown on such matters by the Boston police (not general) strike, which indirectly grew out of refusal by the city and state governments to recognize the police union, or to envisage any arrangement whereby the police could have a voice in the planning of general welfare. Where the police have no such voice in public action, their behavior in a crisis connected with labor is likely to produce a pattern of law enforcement as savage as it may be effective. Perhaps one of the worst examples was seen in the aftermath in San Francisco, when a wild orgy of vigilante behavior brought out the police against the alleged "reds," but with little discrimination on their part between wrecking a Communist headquarters and legal arrest and punishment of subversive groups.

Inevitable conflict occurs, as we have seen, before and during a general strike between the interests of two powerful groups. On the one side stand the citizens with their needs and demands (food, fuel, personal services). They are represented by a Citizens' Committee and organized middle-class ("service") groups, whose function it is to stiffen the spines of government officials (Mayors, Governors, and Presidents), or, if they fail in this, to negotiate compromises where important decisions lie in the balance.

On the other side, labor, with its Strike Committee, is, however unwittingly, negotiating a rival government. In the heat of conflict, measures taken by either side are not always reasonable. Thus we have Strike Committees, ignorant of technological realities, proposing to service one area of a city with light and power while withholding it from others. The Seattle trade unions in this field naturally refused to apply such orders. Again, Strike Committees have denied strike permits to labor newspapers when interunion communications were most vital; and government has seized free private enterprise in radio and television in order to control strike communications.

Further problems of public safety are encountered in connection with supplies and communications. In Benbow's day stored food supplies were extremely rare. Pilling's workers had scarcely a pound sterling to ward off starvation. Even in fairly well organized Seattle a century later, with its restaurants serving hot meals, the uncertainty on surplus foods was great and costly. Nowadays quality and quantity of the less perishable foods available will define some of the supply problems. Mass failure of electric power would endanger immense quantities of refrigerated foods or fruits. Their loss would throw the committee back onto dry foods and canned goods. Public buying hysteria, moreover, would cause appalling waste by unnecessary family stock-piling of food. Inflationary results would hit the average workman first, and the well-to-do last.

In the old days the shutdown of railroads (steam and electric) by the big rail brotherhoods was the nightmare of business. Today the auto helps relieve the pressure in the cases of large tonnage or long-distance trucking. This has had a centrifugal effect on supplies by scattering the supply vehicles where necessary. In other spots, such as the highly congested London docks, the centripetal effect is like that of a blood clot on the brain. Even in time of industrial peace this is vividly seen in

the New York City cross-town traffic. This situation lays an urban population peculiarly open to agitators, who can take advantage of discontent to disrupt distribution.

In the periods before or during an actual strike, the Trucking Trades unions can put on the thumbscrews for united action, and the interests of the citizens are likely to suffer. With the various qualifications seen above under Citizens' Committees, the increasing numbers involved in such large conflicts inevitably heighten the intensity of class feeling, if not of class war. With it all goes the furthering of rival government. This means, in a word, "Whose family shall be fed?" If the strikers don't get ample food at supermarket prices, the strike will soon languish through its own unpopular effects. If citizens' belts are not tightened the strike is a self-admitted failure.

The lack of adequate communication on the part of the Citizens' Committee through inexperience in negotiation needs little emphasis. The background and points of view of industrial magnates versus those of trade union tycoons will show themselves early in a general strike, and will be likely to slow the progress of settlement. Conflicting emphases on types of publicity and modes of communication will waste many hours of peace negotiation. The bitter and prolonged rancor set up by Communists, radicals, and liberal reformists on the Strike Committee was clearly shown in San Francisco, and, more recently, when the Communist agitators the world over have been working on the extension of the class struggle.

Swift, smooth, and sensitive communication is essential to a successful strike or the avoidance of a failure. Skilled interpretation of one vital strike group to another calls for more preparation than twenty-four hours. Nor can great ranges of difference in patterns of living and group values be ignored where quick, rational decisions must be made. Often official and unofficial mediators have before them, in the heat of a general strike, a hundred or more unions, and issues involving life and death. The mutual recrimination after a general strike ends (and is probably lost) by ranks and leaders, in the labor press, political meetings and trade journals, can make a repeated run of brief general strikes a deadly weapon against the interests of labor. Yet the Communists seem totally unable to sense the boredom and heartbreak that afflict millions of workers called upon to produce a general strike for reasons dearer to Moscow than to the specific needs of the workers. This book is full of their story.

Under normal peacetime conditions there is a reasonable flow of comparatively friendly communication between industry and the workers, and between the West and the East. On the other hand, when friction grows, and is irrigated by the Communist brethren, it is high time for the world's governments to produce their Marshall Plans, their UNRRAs, and their NATOs. It is then that world labor must struggle against general strike pressures, lest the old earth succumb in one irrational destructive moment that will turn Sputniks and rocket missiles alike to dust and ashes.

Chapter XVI

THE LOGIC OF THE GENERAL STRIKE

Since my first book was published, in 1931, interest in the general strike has deepened greatly. Vastly more territory has been affected since then; far more nations and cities have passed through the general strike mill. The modern strike tool has been burnished with the conflict of thousands of contestants with special skills. Meanwhile, the battle of the "logics" rolls on. Benjamin Stolberg had it in mind when he called the general strike "one of those complex naivetes of social theory which are profound, simple, all embracing," and "the metaphysical stumbling block of almost every social theorist."¹ It would seem that, for as long as mankind is split among the many "isms," so long will each create its own theory of the functions and goals of the general strike.

Conceptions of this instrument range all the way from a loose popular characterization of any walkout involving great numbers to the Utopian absolute: the cessation of all labor. The first is more properly designated as "generalized." While it is not here denied that the generalized variety may have pervasive effects, it is not the subject under discussion.² All members of the U.M.W.A., from ocean to ocean, could not by themselves make a general strike. On the other hand, in San Francisco alone, in 1934, there were on strike sufficient numbers of different but critical workers in key industries — longshoremen, seamen, and truckers — to form a basis for a valid general strike.

The absolutist conception, complete cessation of all labor, was the subject of intensive study by Georges Sorel. He held that it could only be a myth; that complete stoppage would be so self-stultifying, even suicidal, that the workers themselves could not sustain it. Jack London, in a fictional "Dream of Debs,"³ pictured a rigorously planned walkout of all workers in one city and its hinterland, which rapidly developed into complete anarchy for non-workers ("slum-dwellers" and the capitalist class), while the trade union workers lived in plenty and controlled all phases of economic life. Whatever the original grievance, the method was to starve the employers into submission as they had starved the workers in the past. The

associated emotion was that of revenge, and the technique of turning the tables one of revolution.

Let the debates rage. In simple reality, there have been stoppages which both theorists and practical labor men agreed to classify as general strikes. The heart of the definition lies in the drive toward complete cessation of production. Further, it is the purposeful cessation that matters, and it is for a limited time. Its completeness is accomplished through an interaction of self-seeking, group loyalty, and sacrifice on behalf of others.

The origins of the general strike were revolutionary in intent. Benbow considered that 499 out of 500 of the population were his "plundered fellow-sufferers." He proposed the general strike as a means of putting into circulation "everything — man, property, and money," to secure the greatest sum of happiness for all, and so reform society. He also advocated armed revolution. Hence the revolutionaries have included him in their roster together with Big Bill Haywood of the I. W. W., Rosa Luxemburg's Spartacists, the Spanish Anarchists, the Russian Revolutionaries of 1905 and 1917, the Russian Communists from 1917 on, and many a current Spanish and Latin American follower. All these might be said to embody the left wing of general strike theory. Their logic, neither economic nor political, is avowedly revolutionary; their purpose is subversive — the breakdown of the existing patterns of social custom, and their replacement by some scheme of new and perhaps stateless economy. They may view the general strike as the opening gun of revolution, or cherish it, with Rosa Luxemburg, as "the form of revolutionary struggle at a given moment," its "strongest pulse."

It stands to reason that a self-styled revolutionary general strike is a threat to existing government. The logic of this type of strike, when rigorously pursued, seems to be to endow organized and unorganized workers with the powers of government. Thus the main dilemma involved in a revolutionary general strike is the creation of a parallel or rival government. In this creation lies a critical issue of the struggle. The normal functions of government (order, fire and disaster prevention, and so forth) are met by a rival government with sternly restricted facilities and freedoms. The limitation of freedoms is in itself a severe loss of popular liberties such as would otherwise probably never occur.

When a general strike is confessedly revolutionary in character, as in Hungary in 1956-57, or when labor claims that its ultimate goal is subversive and destructive of social patterns, there is no disguising its nature, try as the Communist party may to do so. A general strike with class war as its central aim cannot be mistaken for any other breed of cat. Thus clearly those in Russia in 1917 and the Germany of the Spartacists in 1918-20 were unmitigated revolution.

By contrast, the promoters of a purely political general strike contemplate no subversion, no violation of the constitutional principle. Indeed, they frequently call for justice through a more rigorous observance of laws that are already on the books, or an extension of their provisions. Again, they may demand the repeal of a discriminatory law. Or the aim may be to unseat government officers on grounds of misfeasance — doing lawful acts in unlawful manner; or for nonfeasance — failing to perform their duty as prescribed by law. It is significant that such officers are usually replaced; it is not the office that is abolished, unless it gives way to another which is thought to minister more truly to the needs of the workers or the people at large. Dictators may be deposed for setting personal ambition above the public good; thereafter new laws often limit the power of their successors. Ramsay MacDonald, in reluctant admission that a general strike might be used for political purposes — extension of the franchise, for instance — made the point that before a strike could be initiated the grievance must have grown well-nigh intolerable, and be recognized as such by popular protest. Thus in purely political strikes the citizens believe themselves to be acting for a principle greater than the individual, to preserve the rights and freedoms of the people.

The program and the means of waging a political general strike are constructive in intent, even if they may seem to a conservative class or government to smack of revolution. This is not so with the revolutionary; he seizes a propitious moment to play upon the weakness of a leader or an organization, and adapts his method to the situation of the moment; granting a basic ideology of class struggle and a battery of time-tested expedients, he may yet invent devices *ad hoc*, and anything goes. The political protest, on the other hand, seeks to influence the existing constitutional government, the colonial ruler, or sometimes the oppressor, toward conceding or restoring civil rights through procedures rooted in law and due process.

The vote, referendum, and recall are matters of popular pride and sacred trust. Leaders who hold the franchise worth sacrifice are not inclined to list riot in the agenda. If, in the heat of the contest, heads are bashed instead of counted, it is owing, not to premeditation, but to the frailty of human nature. Such, at least, are the principles for which the worker citizenry propose to call a halt in production to impress the law-giver or administrator with the need for revision or redress.

The political strike in its purest, sanest form has occurred more than once in Belgium, whose citizens have used it as an effective political weapon to forestall a crime against the mass of workers. They resorted to a national walkout in protest against their king and in favor of his abdication. The Belgian labor vote advocated the simultaneous assumption of the throne by Prince Baudouin. At other times this strike-trained nation has wrested from government, church, or party a more equitable franchise, or a reduction of years of army service. Cyprus, the Gold Coast, Haiti, Ecuador and East Germany have been arenas of general strikes called during the nineteen-forties and fifties for purposes having to do with the redress of political wrongs or the conservation of constitutional government. The general strikes in Vienna in 1927 and 1934 made the same attempt, only to culminate in explosions heard round the world.

In several other countries, and notably in France and Italy, the political general strike is wont to become a widespread melee of violence and killing. This has to some extent been the product of Communist strategy, and reflects the tendency, when Communists are present in labor ranks, or in the country, for the simple political strike to be diverted into revolutionary directions.

As has been said above, a revolutionary general strike tends – nay, seeks – to create a rival government. The same tendency is latent in the political strike, however innocent its leaders and the rank and file may be of such intent. Here a carefully planned campaign involves setting up at the outset machinery for feeding and protecting the workers for the duration. In the very administration of the strike some of the functions of government are taken over. Thus in Belgium in 1913 four commissions were set up by labor to administer propaganda, finances, food, and the evacuation of the strikers'

children. Community meals were organized for the poorest workers and their children. The younger and more militant Socialists were drafted as labor police. If this sort of administration has not been too evident in some other political strikes, it was often because a one- or two-day strike did not call for it; because the strike exploded without advance planning; or because the Communists took a hand, and assumed that starvation and disorder would further their cause.

Whereas in revolutionary and political general strikes the parties in contest are workers as citizens over against the government, in economic strikes the corresponding sides are those of the workers as employees against the employers. In most cases the employers are engaged in industry for their own profit; in a few, the government is the employer. At all events, the economic strike in its purest form is triggered by employees who have demanded a raise in wage, a shortening of hours, better working conditions, or some so-called "fringe benefit." Often they have made the best, over months or years, of intra-plant bargaining without attaining much satisfaction. They are joined by members of the same unions in other plants and other trades in a sympathy strike, which calls for undiluted sacrifice by those not included in the original dispute, because the vast majority stand to lose much, but to gain little. The strikers hope, by exposing their plight to the attention of the general public (presumably neutral), to draft the latter as umpire. Here, however, labor often fails to recognize that the general public is seldom willing to remain neutral once the status of umpire has become uncomfortable or dangerous. The man of fable tightened his coat against the gales, removing it only when the sun beamed upon him in warmth. Thus in many cases labor's expectation is blighted when the public goes to the aid of the employer, or sets up citizens' committees in its own interest, to keep necessary utilities and other services running.

Except in the case of certain few unions which have applied themselves to learning the legislative and playing the political games, the leaders of a relatively uncomplicated economic strike in the industrial field are innocent of any intention to impinge in any way upon the regularly constituted government. Charged with such design, they may, in fact, protest frenetically and in all sincerity, as did the British strike leaders in 1926. As for the rank and file, their interest is in immediate considerations — more bread, easier working conditions, and

even more leisure, but not in anything to do with changing the government. (Even the Communists know this; if they have infiltrated, their propaganda to the rank and file is first of all in strictly personal betterment terms.)

Despite their protested innocence, if such a strike is proposed for a duration of more than two or three days, a strike committee possessed of any forethought will appraise what deprivations the cessation of production will cause to the community, as well as to the strikers and their families. Success will be conditioned by the regard shown in common humanity for infants, the sick, and all who are under stress of emergency. For these some services must be maintained. Those who have downed tools and their families must be fed and protected if labor would win the contest. If in some countries, notably the United States, coffers of the national unions are ready to share funds built up for just such purposes, so much the easier. But even this requires organization and bookkeeping at the grass roots. Other problems, and they are often of life and death, concern water and power supply, and fire and police protection. As is shown in another chapter, the police may remain steadfast in their sworn duties, or on occasion may join the strikers. In the former case their instructions from headquarters may range all the way from "Stay out of it" to "Clear the streets and the plants at any cost." In response to either form of behavior, and for protection in general, labor will often see the necessity of organizing its own police force.

Among the duties of a strike committee may be the issuance of edicts of priority for coal (rather than cement), and for hospital laundries (not theater companies). Its members, if they have made adequate provision for all these and other contingencies, will carry through its administration convinced that they are conscientiously meeting the essential needs for the time of emergency. They may then be stunned at accusations from industry, government or the press that, in the committee's selection of function and its protective measures, it has usurped government prerogative. There is no blinking the fact that it has done exactly that. Even if its measures are planned and administered from the best of motives for the community welfare, and only for the duration of the strike, it has in truth set up a rival government.

Historic examples can be cited. The Swedish strike of 1909, while an early example, included, in its use of labor resources,

the selection of functions, priorities and volunteer aides to assist the police. San Francisco in 1934 had vivid instances of interference with the normal functioning of democratic government, including vigilantes' action at the close of the strike. In Winnipeg, where the strike was longer and more stubborn, the early temporary strike committee was a kind of ad hoc and illegal authority, compelled to assume some governmental functions simply to keep social life moving. Improvisation rather than premeditation was the picture, as witness the reversal of strike permit orders on milk and bread delivery after the first twenty-four hours of the strike. Apparently the strike committee saw the logic of its position. If public services were to run at all, government and citizens must be responsible. The record does not support the idea that this economic strike was a premeditated attempt to overthrow the government. Nor is it possible to argue that the radicals meant to use it as part of a larger conspiracy to snatch revolution where and when they could get it. "The entirely peaceful policy of the strike committee and the absence of any attempt at force"⁴ indicate this.

In 1926 in Britain the government refused to enter "into partnership with a rival government."⁵ At the same time, union leaders of the railroads banned work on any kind of traffic, food or merchandise. Evidently the common attitude of strike committee members, largely adopted by the ranks, was well summed up by the committeeman who described a "cap in hand" request of employers for permits to move goods: "Most of them turned empty away after a most humiliating experience, for one and all were put through a stern questioning, just to make them realize that we and not they were the salt of the earth."⁶

Perhaps the most challenging example, in the United States, of interference with government was in Seattle, where the labor editor threatened: "Labor will not only shut down the industries, but labor will reopen, under the management of the appropriate trades, such activities as are needed to preserve public health and public peace."⁷ A similar recognition of the strike committee's power is seen in the Nation's comment on Seattle: "Before the Committee... appeared a long succession of business men, city officials, and the Mayor himself, not to threaten or bully, but to discuss the situation and ask the approval of the committee for this or that step."⁸ The strike committee's choice of exempted workers and the industrial plants they were

allotted in Seattle led the public to consider the general strike a threat to continued economic functioning of a democratic society. The raising and use of a labor police force emphasized the fear of the citizens that this meant a rival government. Anna Louise Strong's editorial, "No One Knows Where," vague as it was and indicative of the leaders' uncertainty, seemed an unleashed socialism that unnerved the captains of industry throughout the nation. The Mayor pointed out cogently that a general strike was "all the more dangerous because quiet — it puts the government out of operation. And that is all there is to revolt, no matter how achieved."⁹

In conclusion, it may be said that the logic of the general strike is something living, changing and developing. It is not of one piece, but many, and perhaps to be spoken of in the plural, since each "ism" promulgates a logic of its own. In origin revolutionary, in experience any logic partakes of the Weltanschauung of the country in which it arises. Thus, as general strikes emerge in new areas of the globe, the accompanying logics spring in part from the characteristic relations of labor, management, government and the public. A sample of the adaptability of theory — of lack of it — is shown in certain Central and South American societies which have, with unabashed opportunism, promoted successive strikes within a short period of time, presenting one as an economic instrument, the next as political, and yet another as revolutionary. In Cuba, Castro seems to have used the general strike as a practical device, with no particular sense of logic, but somewhat in lieu of a curfew or moratorium until he could muster his forces for the next step. The contrast between pulling out all the stops to get the most bang out of the organ and the typical tactics in North America, where anything but an economic strike is a rarity, probably reflects fundamental differences in logic between countries with a penchant for revolution and those of a more stable and prosperous democracy.

Among unusual manifestations in recent years have been four successive general strikes in one year in Haiti. There the popular feeling against dictators and army bureaucracy prevented anything more than temporary election or appointment of any of the candidates as President of the Republic. An unusual feature of these outbreaks was the wide acceptance of business men as instigators of the anti-army general strike. Most significant of all, it may be, was the surprised

gratification of the citizenry over the effectiveness of a general strike as a substitute for the violence usually employed to oust an unpopular chief of state. This implies that, as civilization goes, the general strike is one step upward from civil war. Thus it is conceivable that Central and South America will demonstrate new patterns in technique, and, in time, yet another logic.

Chapter XVII

GENERAL STRIKE TRENDS

Theory

In the preceding chapters the main emphasis has been upon the various types of general strike in practice the world over. This chapter is concerned more specifically with the ideas that, over the years, have become attached to this labor weapon. In such a chapter, moreover, it is legitimate for the writer to put forward certain concepts and conclusions of his own. The raw data from which these have been drawn are available to the reader in the earlier chapters, or else in the Appendix, where many thumbnail sketches are assembled of general strikes that do not receive detailed consideration elsewhere in this book.

In the first place, how is one to identify a general strike and distinguish it from the ordinary run of work stoppages? The essential test would seem to be the complete or near paralysis of the economic life of the community, whether a city or a nation, in order to achieve certain ends desired by the strikers. The character of these ends largely determines the category into which a strike falls.

The strike may be economic, caused by specific maladjustments in industrial relations, such as pay rates or hours of work. Economic strikes will be directed, at least at the outset, against employers rather than against the government or the public. Such was the intention of the British strike leaders in 1926 — a sympathetic economic walkout to ensure that the coal miners should not be compelled to take either a cut in wages or an extension in hours of work. ("Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day.")

Again, the general strike may be political, aimed at the government, as in Belgium, where at different times the universal vote was demanded; or the abdication of the king and replacement by his son; or the reduction of months of compulsory military service. None of these demands was in itself revolutionary, but each was plainly political, appealing to many elements of the population outside of the trade unions and the working class.

Finally, the general strike may be revolutionary, in the sense that it goes beyond the demand for economic adjustment

or political changes and challenges the actual functioning government of the city, province, or nation involved. The strikes in Russia, in Spain, in Hungary, and in some of the Latin American lands are cases in point, where both the government and the people were directly involved.

Any of these three types may be converted while in process into one of the other two. It was fear of conversion from an economic to a political strike that haunted the British labor leaders in 1926. It is the ever-present hope of the Communist groups in each nation to turn an economic strike into a political or even a revolutionary struggle. This was evident in many recent French and Italian strikes, and somewhat less clearly visible in San Francisco in 1934. There is, in short, some ambiguity about the type and character of the general strike.

A strictly economic one that includes many unions seeking no individual economic gain is hard to find in Latin America and in large areas of Asia, where democracy is so overlaid with military power and control as to be almost unrecognizable. Even where the conflict is economic and is strictly so intended by those on strike, the government or the employers may make every effort to "sell" the public with the idea that the struggle is revolutionary, not economic at all. That was Winston Churchill's logic in the British strike of 1926. That, too, was the tale reiterated by most of the San Francisco press.

Even a political strike, such as any of those in Belgium, may be declared by the government that is under criticism to be an outrageous attack upon all the voters of the nation. It is here that so much depends upon the aim of the strikers and their leaders. It must involve more than a labor demand, and large sections of people outside of the unions must have evident sympathy for it. Otherwise the government in power succeeds through specious propaganda in splitting the friendly public from the workers, and then utilizes the military.

In the revolutionary general strike, so intended by its leaders, we find that not only the employers but the government and certain landed industrial or commercial classes are included by the strikers in the groups or institutions that must be destroyed or reconstructed. Plainly no group or class is quietly going to sit on the sidelines and watch the strikers and the government slug it out to a finish. The inescapable logic, therefore, of a revolutionary general strike is the need by organized labor of trained and armed forces, and the subversion and

mutiny of some at least of the military effectives of the nation involved. Vienna in 1934, Madrid in 1936-39, and Hungary in 1956 offered vivid and tragic lessons in what happens in modern street fighting, where skilled technicians and the air force and military are not available to labor in sufficient numbers.

1. Early Theory

Reviewing general strike history, one is struck by the naivete of early theory. It is surprising to find how many and varied were the labor leaders who believed that all the workers had to do was stay home with folded arms, and the strike would be won. Up to the nineties an effective general strike was looked upon as the great catastrophe that would end capitalism legally and peacefully.

There were some, it is true, like Jules Guesde, French Revolutionary Socialist, who held that the social revolution could be brought about — when the workers were ready for it — only by a combination of the general strike and the defection of the army. Many wanted to know of Guesde why it was expected that the army would desert. If war was the occasion of the mutiny, and defeat threatened the nation, all classes would be buried in the same ruins. If it were an economic depression that gave rise to the army's defection, would the workers be any better off for the general strike and the social revolution?

In 1896 Guerard, a French railroad worker, suggested that no official date could ever be set for a general strike, because it would burst forth without warning, perhaps with a railroad strike as its forerunner. Those who continued to work would be urged, or forced, to quit. Such a general strike would "be the Revolution, peaceful or not."

Up to the present century France seems to have been the home of general strike theory. In the effort to put that theory into practice several rather futile attempts were made to convert the workers of France to the active support of the strike. Labor congresses voted in its favor, but when the time came there was no action. The majority of the organized workers in France (the C. G. T.) were evidently hostile. Even Aristide Briand, in his youth an advocate of the general strike, in 1910, as head of the French government, mobilized striking railwaymen as reservists and sent them back to work. Consequently it was not until much later, 1934, that a full-blooded, successful general strike was carried through. France, however,

remained a great hothouse of theory. Rather crudely one can divide the theorists into two camps, represented by the Syndicalists and the Socialists. Untold energy was wasted in attacks on the concepts of the opposite camp.

Jean Jaurès was perhaps one of the best exponents of the Socialist view. He believed wholeheartedly that the time would come when the Socialist party must take part in the task of running the French political machine. His bias was in favor of the orderly, evolutionary conquest of the voters. Certain basic conditions were essential, to Jaurès, before a general strike could be successful. The workers must be deeply convinced of the importance of the aim for which the strike was called. Further, a large section of the general public must be willing to recognize the legitimacy of the workers' aims. Finally, the strike must not seem an excuse for violence, but a legal right – the right to strike on the largest conceivable scale. An eight-hour day and Old Age Pensions were the kinds of reform that he held would comply with these three requirements.

To Jaurès any attempt to steer a general strike into the road to revolution and the abolition of the capitalist system would be a vicious trick to entrap the workers. A revolutionary general strike that failed would leave capital in power, "armed with implacable fury," while the workers "would be disarmed, crushed and fettered for an indefinite period." Even if the revolutionary strike succeeded temporarily, the resistance of the middle and upper classes, and the dire need of high caliber technicians and competent supervisory and executive abilities would be hard to meet. Occupation of the nation's plants would not be enough. Production would have to continue and output improve, or the workers and the people as a whole would be worse off than before. Pre-Fascist Italy and Soviet Russia were examples that Jaurès would have claimed as proof of his point. Yet it would not be correct to say that under every circumstance Jaurès would have denied the usefulness of a revolutionary strike. If the hard-won liberties of the workers, the Parliamentary franchise, or the right to organize and to strike, were seriously threatened by some reactionary government, then the revolutionary general strike might be part of the desperate acts that labor would have to undertake.

Realist as Jaurès seemed to be when assessing the use of this weapon, he found himself on the side of those who believed in the international general strike in the event of threatened

war between two or more nations. He saw the danger of any hit-or-miss attempt breaking out in one nation rather than in both, or in one spot and not in another, but held that the International would "allow the strike to end in that country which first offers arbitration to the other." Jaurès was a victim of his theory, being assassinated just before the outbreak of World War I, when his presence was sorely needed by organized labor on both sides of the Rhein.

The other camp of theorists, the Syndicalists and the Revolutionary Socialists, represented in France by men like Pouget, Griffuelhes, Lagardelle and Georges Sorel, made the general strike, and that the revolutionary one, the very hub of their theory. Direct action was their daily motto, whether it meant sabotage, the sit-down, or swift strikes without notice. This was the gospel of the American I. W. W., and to a lesser degree of the Canadian One Big Union advocates of the second decade of this century. To such men and their followers the general strike was the ultimate act of a working class that had attained full maturity. To them it was indeed the Social Revolution, achieved by the masses, who in a moment of supreme revolt would take possession of the means of production and the machinery of the State. The Anarcho-Syndicalists of Spain and some Latin American lands would have approved this set of ideas, provided it would not mean the ultimate re-creation of a bureaucratic state and its red tape. The Syndicalist group seemed to have no doubt that they could instantly convert a "supremely revolutionary" proletariat into a thinking and planning nation of highly productive and technical efficiency. Once more, Russia stands as a warning example, for there the power of government and industry was taken over at the critical moment by a very small minority of determined revolutionaries (led by Trotsky or by Lenin — who will ever really know?), and to this day the Soviet economy creaks and the agricultural output of the nation trails far behind the best lands of Europe, not to mention the unseemly surplus of the U. S. A.

It would be unfitting in a chapter on the theory of the general strike not to mention the work of Georges Sorel, Syndicalist philosopher who was always tilting at the ignorant folly of the "reformist intellectuals" in the opposite camp. Sorel was not as clear in his own mind about the details of the revolutionary general strike as were some contemporary writers, such as Pouget, who, with Pataud, wrote the revolutionists' handbook,

Comment Nous Feron la Révolution. To Sorel it really did not matter if a general strike was never successfully accomplished. The idea of the great social strike was everything. The "myth," as he called it, was what gave men strength to carry on the class struggle.

The question whether the general strike is a partial reality, or only a product of popular imagination, is of little importance. All that it is necessary to know is, whether the general strike contains everything that the Socialist doctrine expects of the revolutionary proletariat. Strikes have engendered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that they possess; the general strike groups them all in a coordinated picture, and, by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum of intensity. . . . 1

The greatest weakness of this camp, especially those who thought and wrote as did Sorel, was the energy put into criticism of the opposite camp, and the almost total absence of self-criticism of their own genuine unpreparedness. They gave no thought to the characteristics of the new social order that was to follow the defeat of the old system. Despite Sorel, realists must admit that the Syndicalist ideal of worker unity is far removed from the brutal facts of history and of human nature. One can almost echo the comment of Étienne Buisson that "never will a class-conscious, critical and intelligent proletariat accept with unanimity one program or one method."

2. Reactions to French Theory

We have seen something of the thinking of the workers and their leaders in that land of theory, France. Let us now follow the French ideas on the general strike as they developed support or hostility in the rest of organized labor. The first serious consideration of the subject for purposes other than the prevention of international war occurred in the International Congress at Amsterdam in 1904. Pressure from the Syndicalists, and actual attempts at a general strike in more than one country together led to a special report from the Social Democratic party of Holland, where there had been a disastrous failure in 1903. This report turned attention to the political general strike, which was anathema to the Syndicalists. Belgium and Sweden

had showed that, while the political strike was dangerous, it was not necessarily harmful. A government might give the vote to, or take it from, the workers, but it could not stop them from "trying to intimidate and disorganize" that hostile government, nor from efforts to affect the public by the cessation of production and transportation. Revolt against the army was not possible, and refusal to pay taxes was a weapon rather for the middle classes; what else remained save the general strike?

Plainly the purpose here was not that of the French Syndicalists, who aimed at the Social Revolution. But by thirty-six to four a resolution was passed by the International, of which the following two paragraphs are significant:

That the general strike, if by that term is meant the complete cessation of all work at a given moment, can not be carried out, because such a strike would render impossible all existence, whether proletarian or otherwise....

That it is possible, nonetheless, for a strike which extends either to a great number of trades, or to the most important trades in the functioning of economic life, to be the supreme means for achieving social changes of great importance, or for defense against reactionary attacks on the rights of the workers.²

The next year, 1905, Bernstein spoke for German Social Democracy in a manner showing little support for the French Syndicalists. Any hasty general strike was as foolish, and led to as useless sacrifice, as hasty barricades. Small unsuccessful political strikes, he said, did not, as the Syndicalists contended, "educate" the workers. Their failure merely terrified all concerned. A revolutionary strike would bring with it the danger of attacks upon the masses in the streets by better disciplined soldiery. Hence a non-violent general strike was essential. That Bernstein spoke not only for his party but for the majority of the German trade unionists was evident from the rejection of a mass strike resolution at the Cologne meeting of the unions. After a short interlude, during which a pro-strike resolution was overwhelmingly supported in the Jena Congress of the Social Democrat party, and a successful revolutionary strike occurred in Russia in the autumn of 1905, it became clear enough that neither German trade union nor party leaders intended to

resort to the mass strike if in any manner they could avoid it. By 1907 the tide was at full ebb. Kautsky at the International Congress at Stuttgart expressed the view: "The general strike must not be regarded as a means of economic struggle." It was a political struggle of last resort, which would call for a united and enthusiastic working class. The bitter economic general strike in Sweden in 1909 undoubtedly taught further caution to German leaders.

Karl Liebknecht, who later helped to establish the German Spartacists (Communists), cynically declared that if "a complete harmony of all parts of the working-class movement" were requisite to a successful mass strike, "there would never have been a general strike." Rosa Luxemburg, chief pamphleteer for the Spartacists, held that the political mass strike mobilized in the Russian revolution of 1905 offered the most valuable lesson for the next stage of the German and Western European working-class movements. Feeling strongly that a general strike with political aims had an inevitable revolutionary implication, she declared that violence would always be the "ultima ratio for the working class," essential, whether latent or active, to the class struggle, and that parliamentary and other devices merely round out the activity.³ The mass strike, Luxemburg explained, "is nothing but the form of revolutionary struggle at a given moment. . . . It is the strongest pulse of the revolution and at the same time its most powerful impulse."⁴ Again, she defined the function of the (Social Democrat) party leaders: "The most important task of the party leadership in this period of mass strikes is to give the struggle an aim and a direction. . . ."⁵ German Social Democrats, she held, should not oppose general strikes with economic demands, but rather should seek to guide them into the main channel of the revolution.⁶ For the part actually played by her and her radical colleague, Liebknecht, in the German revolutionary period, 1918-1920, the reader should refer to Chapter XIV on the Revolutionary General Strike.

3. British and American Theory

As conflict of opinion on the methods and values of the general strike, economic, political or revolutionary, swung first one way and then the other, the twentieth century brought to North America and the British Isles a new interest in the subject. The last of any importance heard about this labor weapon

in Britain had been the "direct action" of Richard Pilling and his "Plug Plot" in the forties of the nineteenth century. Though William Benbow may have left behind seeds of his "grand national holiday" to spring up in the most unlikely places, it was not until the appearance of Tom Mann in Australia and England, Jim Larkin in Ireland, and Big Bill Haywood in the United States around 1910, that the Anglo-Saxon wing of the world labor movement began to think about sabotage, One Big Union and the general strike.⁷ Haywood's I. W. W. had carried these ideas down to Australia, and it was there that Tom Mann acquired the notion of the strike for the social revolution. Mann found Syndicalism widely preached in Britain, with emphasis upon the fighting nature of the trade union or syndicat. As British Parliamentary labor became increasingly "reformist," the ranks of semiskilled industrial workers became restless for more dynamic leaders to follow. "Direct action" journals sprang up overnight in which both political action and the state itself were attacked. Frequent strikes were advocated to make capital weary of its job and ready to surrender to the workers, who would ultimately take over control in each industry.⁸

In America from its first convention in 1905 the Industrial Workers of the World (I. W. W.) carried as one of its major aims the social general strike as the final solution of the class struggle. In 1912 Haywood threatened to use the localized general strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in support of the striking textile workers of that city. He said: "If we prevail on other workers who handle your goods to help you out by going on strike, we will tie up the railroads, put the city in darkness, and starve the soldiers out."⁹ That was a childish conception of the way in which a general strike works, but it was typical of Haywood. In the previous year he had made a speech in New York City in which he had lumped together as general strikes the Paris Commune of 1871, the revolutionary strikes in Spain and Russia, the political mass strikes in Belgium, the economic struggle in Sweden, and the "generalized" strikes on the French and Italian railroads. Then he analyzed all mass strikes as of three kinds: a single industry, a single community, and a nation-wide general strike. "The conditions for any of these three have never existed," he calmly declared, despite the long list with which he had opened his speech.¹⁰

Tom Mann, with a somewhat more coherent philosophy, held that the general strike of national proportions

will be the actual Social and Industrial Revolution. The workers will refuse to any longer manipulate the machinery of production in the interest of the capitalist class, and there will be no power on earth to compel them to work when they thus refuse. . . . When the capitalists get tired of running industries, the workers will cheerfully invite them to abdicate, and through and by their industrial organizations will run the industries themselves in the interests of the whole community.¹¹

Alongside these uncritical judgments one can place an editorial in the American Socialist daily, the New York Call, in 1911: "The failure of one general strike, or any attempt to carry out a general strike, does not bankrupt or destroy the working class. . . . Nor does such failure help capitalism. . . . On the contrary, it helps disintegrate it, and the failure itself is merely the necessary prelude to a still stronger assault by the same method."¹²

As for the British situation, such extremes of Syndicalist theory were not common among labor men until the early twenties. Hyndman, a Marxian leader, dismissed the general strike as a "sentimental effort to hasten the development of humanity," while the revolutionary strike seemed to him a gross underestimate of middle-class intelligence. Ramsay MacDonald, who was to go through the experience of a full-blown general strike in 1926, had objected long before to the basic dogma in Syndicalist thought, the class struggle. Of the revolutionary strike he wrote: "It hits the poor people heaviest, the middle class next, and the rich least of all. If surrender is therefore to come by social pressure the program works from exactly the wrong end, for the class that must surrender first is the poor, and the surrender of the poor does not mean the triumph of the revolution, but the collapse of the strike."¹³ Time, MacDonald believed, would not, as the Syndicalists taught, be on the workers' side, but on that of the middle and upper classes. It would give these, who had the same will to live, the chance to organize against labor.

Philip Snowden contended that the advocates of the general strike were assuming a totally improbable working-class unity, for which there was no support in experience. This view might, perhaps, have been qualified had the British strike of 1926 taken place before Snowden wrote his Socialism and Syndicalism.

4. World War I

Theory on the use of an international general strike as a preventive of war vanished like mists in the sun before the crisis of World War I. In Britain as in Europe the most militant Syndicalists, such as the miners, were among the very first to enlist, where labor was not drafted. In Britain and Russia, in Germany and France alike, the legions marched. In France the "patriots" assassinated Jaurès, even before the war started. French labor leaders, like the French ranks, marched against the national enemy. Had they not done so, the ranks would have liquidated them with little finesse.

When the war ended the story was different. Not only would the worker's take-home pay no longer buy what it did in 1913, but hard-won trade union safeguards in legislation and contracts had gone by the board during the war. Though the Restoration of Prewar Practices Act was put on the British statute book, the government did nothing to see the Act was enforced. Labor unrest rapidly grew. There was a sudden and popular revival of the general strike idea, especially among the younger labor ranks, many of whom looked upon it as an invincible weapon, regardless of the war's lessons. Nineteen eighteen to 1920 were years of seething discontent and labor rebellion, the world over. Some of this emotional heat was released in serious regional or national general strikes, or threats thereof. From Seattle and Winnipeg to France and Germany the strike weapon spread. Strike threats due to fear of war with Russia or demands by the miners for nationalization of the coal mines kept British affairs in a turmoil. The belief in the efficacy of the general strike reached its peak in Britain at that time, but was down again in the valley by 1926, Winston Churchill to the contrary.¹⁴

During that period of trust in the national walkout, responsible British labor officials were admitting that resort to the general strike was "a challenge to the whole constitution of the country," that it was a "desperate and dangerous remedy," but that, used to maintain world peace, it far transcended any claim for wages or hours. It was a legitimate and powerful tool for political purposes. Even normal opponents of the general strike admitted that Parliamentary action would not work quickly enough to "save the country from being committed to war against its will." In brief, labor believed the general strike was an effective weapon where all others might fail.

In greatest contrast to this attitude of 1919-20, British labor leaders in 1926 were in terror that the strike might be converted to a political, or even a revolutionary, struggle, which was the last thing they desired. It might be said that the strike of 1926 was lost before it began, as far as labor officials were concerned. They had no heart in a conflict of such dimensions that might so readily be changed in its purpose and technique, by the government, if not by the ranks of labor.¹⁵ Towards the end of the strike the workers recognized the struggle as one between the government (not the coal owners) and the forces of labor. Further, strike committees with power to grant exemptions often sensed the class element in the struggle. Committeemen put employers through a mill of questions, "just to make them realize that we and not they were the salt of the earth." Whatever patchwork of theory the T. U. C. and Parliamentary leaders possessed on the general strike, it was poles apart from that of Soviet Russia. *Izvestia* declared: "The reformist leaders not only did not steer for revolution but, taking fright at the revolutionary outlook, they did not even use the force of the masses for pressure upon the Government and the bourgeoisie to extort concessions of an economic character. They capitulated without any conditions."¹⁶ The fairest description of the state of mind of British leaders in 1926 on the general strike can be found in a non-Communist left-wing journal which summed up the situation: "The T. U. C. General Council had an almost overwhelming desire for peace. This must not be thought of as betrayal, or selling the pass. In principle and in practice they were against a general strike, and they had said so again and again."¹⁷ (*Italics added.*)

In Europe between the two World Wars Spain offered the most frenetic example of a nation given over to general strikes, most of them distinctly of a revolutionary character. Long training of the Spanish worker in the tenets of Anarchism (fear of, and contempt for, the State, which supposedly destroyed individual freedom with its red tape and brutality) made the Spaniard ever ready to try a general strike either in a single city or in the whole nation. Though Anarcho-Syndicalists (C. N. T.) had no use for the state and its government, they often participated in a general strike originated by Communists, who were far from believing in the Marxian concept of the ultimate "withering away of the State." With an equally strange and tangled logic, the Anarcho-Syndicalists would at times

refuse to take part in a general strike called by the Socialists (U. G. T.), because the latter had great faith in the Socialist State. Despite this element of uncertainty in the support of a general strike, in the last four months before the beginning of the Spanish Civil War there were at least one hundred such walkouts within the boundaries of Spain. 18

Peoples with democratic institutions such as parliament, free press and speech, and secret ballot, seldom have suffered an economic general strike to end in armed insurrection and revolution. In contrast, Spain and the Latin American nations have mixed the three types of the general strike so freely with the use of armed insurrection that it is difficult to find a clear case of an economic strike in those areas, or for that matter any particularly clear thinking about general strike theory. Chapters XII to XIV, The Political General Strike and the Revolutionary General Strike, deal with the practice before and after the second World War, but provide no startling, new aspect of theory that is not at least considered in the remainder of this chapter.

Recent Practice

1. Prevalence

The most obvious change in the general strike in the last three decades is one of frequency. Here was a labor method powerful, dangerous, and destructive, to be tried only as a last resort, after all other modes of demonstration and protest had failed. Hence it was originally used only after great provocation or long deliberation. Previous to 1917, so far as available records show, not more than a score of general strikes can be traced. Since then they have proliferated to an extent which baffles enumeration. Most conservatively estimated, the increase between 1917 and 1959 was at least six-fold. Virtually world-wide now, they show in the news almost weekly. In some lands they have been used to the point of nausea, so that even one-time enthusiastic strikers either refuse to go out when called, or go with such reluctance and disapproval as to undermine the strike-makers' program. Beset, in some areas, with incessant strikes or threat of them, many workers have found the strike tactics more and more alien to their interests.

2. Preparation

The shock of surprise, traditionally a strategic element in

all general strikes, has been losing ground of late. An area or a government once subjected to the stresses of a general strike is forewarned. The current tendency to repeat in the same precincts keeps the authorities on the qui vive, watching small signs of what may come. Meanwhile, meticulous preparation by organized labor, where the economic aim of the strike does not involve professional and white collar interests, is likely to introduce the class struggle idea. This is not so true of a political general strike which involves the interests of the middle class. The contrast between the months of preparation by Belgian labor officials for a political strike and the almost utter unpreparedness of the British Trades Union Congress for the economic struggle of 1926 exemplifies this difficulty, all the more so because the British unpreparedness was intentional, lest the public come to infer a revolutionary purpose on the part of labor. Preparation, even over a very short time, can tip off non-union members of the public, kindling hostility. Between the appointment of an ad hoc Strike Committee and the actual walkout, Seattle strikers had less than a week to decide policy questions on publicity, food kitchens, hospital services, strike exemptions, and labor police. An editorial in the city's labor daily raised just such policy questions, and thereby set Seattle's teeth chattering. Even before the walkout the workers were accused by Seattle's mayor and press of "usurping the prerogatives of the city government."

Some general strikes are called to cope with acute emergencies. Such were the Kapp-Putsch in Berlin, the crises in Vienna in 1927 and in France in 1934, in each of which a bloody overthrow of existing government was prevented. Preparation in such a situation must be almost instant; the outcome depends in most cases upon the loyalty of the unions, their integrity, and their alacrity of response to the strike call.

3. Citizens' Committees

The evidence of the past thirty years seems to show a more determined growth of middle-class and professional groups, or Citizens' Committees, planned to help the city or the nation tide over the hardest days of a general strike by participation with specialists and technicians in the necessary services of society. These groups help to take the sting out of a mass walkout by counteracting the surprise factor, and by giving the precious element of time to the authorities. Such support may not

always be justified, but where it has existed it has usually been of considerable influence in bringing the strike to an end.¹⁹ In its worst form, citizen reaction has given rise to bands of "vigilantes," as in San Francisco; or to armed and militarily trained bands of Fascists, as in Italy. Success in a general strike calls for much middle-class support and at least friendly neutrality from the armed forces. Anything like abuse of the strike weapon will lose labor both of these important aids.

4. Penalties

In the maze of recent general strikes, except when they were clearly victorious, the authorities and the public have meted out severe penalties. Only the most orderly of work stoppages avoids a heavy list of arrests and subsequent imprisonment or fines, even where a tragic death and injury list is not part of the penalty. Politically, the price of losing the strike may be some new restrictive legislation similar to that put on the British statute books a year after the great strike, and not repealed until after the second World War. At the least, a national or local election frequently brings defeat to many labor representatives in Parliament or City Hall. Economically, too, defeated strikers may face a loss in wages with an extension in hours of work, as did the British miners, in whose very behalf the great national strike had taken place.

5. The Communist Pattern

The proliferation of general strikes since 1917, and new methods of conducting them, stand in sharp relief against the record of previous years. Faced with unwonted repetition of strike calls, sometimes only a few days apart, workers have become aware that the reasons given were often only remotely related to their own interests. Whose interest, then, did they serve? From this state of suspicion it was but a step to the realization that the technique of strike following strike was in fact intimately connected with an outside interest — the policy of world imperialism emanating from the U.S.S.R. This is not to say that all general strikes of the present are Communist-inspired. Nevertheless, the Communist abuse of the weapon is the most sensational development of recent decades.

In the early days of the Russian Soviet Republic a warm feeling toward it seemed to animate a great number of labor's advocates in many countries. Here, they felt, was an example

that proved the usefulness of the general strike method, provided one were willing to carry it to its logical conclusion, the revolutionary strike. Like other humans, who are apt to see in this world what they expect and want to see, many labor enthusiasts of the Western world saw in the Russian revolution the answer to a labor man's prayer. Before many years had passed, however, it began to be evident to experienced union members that the logic of the Bolsheviks was a strange patchwork of "now you see it, now you don't." The United Front, as often as not, was the title attached by the Communists to a minority breakaway from the actual mass of organized workers. When Russian policy changed and there was no longer a United Front, infiltration into the existing unions took its place, often with considerable initial success. Again and again local or national irritation of workers over some patent injustice was avidly seized upon by the party, and the general strike was exploited to the utmost. Its original aim was often replaced with a political purpose plainly favoring the U. S. S. R. rather than the workers in the nation involved. This is "old stuff" today, but in the early twenties it was yet to be learned in Western Europe and Australia, as it is today in Asia and Africa.

Perhaps we can term this period of Communist interference and control over the general strike the Period of Abuse. It dates roughly from 1917 to the present. Not every strike in this time has been Communist-initiated; not even every political strike has been so controlled, as witness the two strikes in Belgium concerned with the abdication of King Leopold and the acceptance of the throne by his son, and the demand for a shorter period of compulsory military training for Belgian youth. Nevertheless, no careful student can fail to be aware of a pattern in the resort to the general strike — a pattern suggesting Communist presence or influence. Naturally those peoples having among their voting population sizeable proportions of Communists provide ample evidence. It remains, then, to weigh the degree to which the general strike has been weakened or invalidated by its abuse in Communist practice.

There are many facets in the Communist pattern. A few examples will suffice. In the first place, the abuse of the weapon grows largely from its use as a demonstration — in the streets, of course. It is usually limited to a day, a half-day, or even the ridiculous period of fifteen minutes (as in the Italian protest against the electrocution of the Rosenbergs in the United

States). The purpose is to make a show of numbers to overawe the authorities, or to intimidate labor elements unwilling to strike. It may be used in the hope that disturbances or violence will break out in the streets, and that police or military action to prevent disorder will lead to deaths among the strikers, and consequent heroes for the party. Even a hasty reading of this book will reveal many such incidents. In France and Italy such an episode would almost inevitably force any anti-Communist labor organizations to participate in the next general strike demonstration (which might well be called for the same week), if only to show the authorities that shooting the workers unites rather than divides the labor class. This pattern can be seen even in San Francisco. The massive and amazingly orderly funeral parade up the main streets, for the two workers shot by the police, had no little to do with the labor unity shown in the general strike that followed immediately.

There was yet more evidence in San Francisco. The chapters on that city give data in plenty, some from a West Coast Communist, Sam Darcy. He claims that there would have been no general strike but for the work of his party. The tale told elsewhere, of the long-delayed Communist infiltration of the A. F. L. unions in that city, and of the ultimate loss of Communist influence when conservative labor leaders seized control of the Strike Committee, is documented, for what it is worth, by excerpts from Sam Darcy himself.

Further aspects of the pattern are easily found in the San Francisco case. The build-up of the rank and file movement in the various unions, with expectation of wresting control of the General Strike Committee from the old-line leaders, is all there — but in San Francisco it failed.²⁰ The vituperation of the regular labor leaders by the Communists, the suggestion through the Communist press and oral rumors that they were "fakers" and traitors, is typical the world over. Mr. Bridges, hero of the longshoremen and pet aversion of the conservative union leaders of San Francisco, recently asserted that no Communist ever controlled his union. He may be right. They did not have to. Bridges always claimed he was no Communist, and it is not the task of the author to disprove his assertion. It is enough that his actions followed the party line so closely that a microscope would be needed for discrimination.²¹

Before we leave the subject of the Communists, there is the question of their integrity in the propagation of this general

strike idea. Time and again they have called a strike presumably to meet some economic or semipolitical crisis. If it appears to have any life in it, the announced purpose is subtly changed to a destructive political aim (the liquidation of UNRRA, of NATO, or of the Marshall Plan) which serves the Soviet purpose, but may well damage the cause and the welfare of the workers of the particular nation involved. If it appears to be failing, it is quickly written off the books, and the special interest of the workers concerned is ignored. One example must suffice, though there are dozens scattered through this book. The U. S. S. R. had hoped that the 1926 British general strike would rouse revolutionary feelings as bitter as those of the 1919-20 period. The disappointment of Soviet Russia at the collapse of the English strike was patent. Money had been offered the T. U. C. General Council and refused. The result was the following comment of Zinoviev:

If the English workingmen had won the strike, the world revolution would have taken a tremendous leap forward.... Immediate victory, in the given conditions, would have meant a great step toward the world victory of the labor class.... The decision to reject... the help of the trades unions of the U. S. S. R. had immense political importance. At the moment when the General Council refused to accept the aid of our trades unions, at that moment the strike already had capitulated morally....²²

The general strike supported by the Communists and the rubles offered to the General Council were not to save the economic lives of the British miners, but to ensure the coming of a British revolution.

Dozens of books and theses have been written by "sound" Communists to explain why the Russian Soviet State has not already "withered away," as the strict Marxian theory would require. In fact, the Russian Soviet State is now even stronger and more feared than was the Czarist Government. If the state is stronger than ever, and is, to so many, far more brutal to the workers than the much abused state of the capitalists, why is there not scope for continued use of the general strike — against dictators? The irony is that, once the Communists have possession of a people's government, a general strike is no longer desired or even permitted. If Marx was right in his

belief that every type of society carries within itself the seeds of possible change, then the general strike will probably still be used as a last resort, even by those under the dominion of the U. S. S. R., to deflate the bloated power of the Soviet state. East Germany in 1953 offered an example of the explosive effect of such a strike behind the Iron Curtain. The penalty, of course, was appalling, but the method was still available,²³ as was evidenced by the outbreak in Hungary in 1956.

In fact, the last general strike ever approved in Soviet Russia, if not actually called by the Bolsheviks, was a one-day protest in August, 1917, demanding a reelection of the Moscow Soviet (Council of Workers and Soldiers) because that Soviet was in "conflict with the masses." By this circumlocution Leon Trotsky implied that the non-Communists at the time controlled the Moscow Soviet, and therefore it was proper to demand a new election with the threat of the general strike. When the time came, late that Fall, for Bolshevik leaders to come out of hiding and prison, and when Trotsky was ready with his technical brigades to take over the key government services of St. Petersburg and Moscow, no general strike was needed, and none permitted.²⁴ Unhappily, the labor ranks who have played their part in the Communist-called or controlled general strikes since that time have not always been aware of this cynical lack of integrity in Communist theory.

Conclusion

The odds against a successful general strike are very high. Those that have been rather evidently effective can be counted on one hand, if one ignores the twelve- and twenty-four hour walkout. The latter type loses its effectiveness by too frequent occurrence, causing labor and public alike to despise it.

It may be contended that this judgment overlooks the strikes that culminated in the Soviet form of government in Russia and her satellites. As indicated above, the last Russian general strike took place weeks before Lenin and Trotsky took over the government by armed insurrection. As for the satellites, even though the general strike was used to pressure the Benes government to nationalize large areas of Czech trade, it was rather the armed forces of the Russian invader than the strike that conquered.²⁵ The Soviet method of attack by disorder and the revolutionary general strike failed in 1918-19 in Germany, has not yet succeeded in Italy or France, and certainly does not

seem likely to convince or to conquer the Scandinavians, the British, or the North Americans. The Latin American nations are so accustomed to armed coups d'etat that a few economic or politico-revolutionary general strikes thrown in for good measure do not seem to have too much bearing upon the use of the general strike in the Western world. Asia and Africa are another story; but that will be better told by another generation.

As we have seen above, labor's boomerang has damaged the workers even more than it has harmed the middle- and upper-class income groups in both city and nation. Recently this boomerang characteristic has appeared in a startling way by the use of the general strike in Iron Curtain countries against the Communist puppet governments and the Russian Soviet power. Few if any in Trotsky's day of ascendancy imagined such a strike becoming a deadly weapon against the Communist party itself. Yet that is what has happened. East Germany, Poland and Hungary have shown what desperate men can do, even after all military efforts have been crushed and the Soviets again control the satellite nations. Who knows? The general strike may yet be the bomb that wrecks the Iron Curtain.

What was written in 1931 still remains true. If anything, it gains validity from the innumerable strikes that have occurred since then:

To hope for success the leaders of a general strike must make the aim simple, clear to all, and as far as possible one that will not isolate the striking proletariat completely from all the remaining groups in society. For that reason, a political mass strike for such a demand as universal suffrage is more likely to gain its end than an economic general strike with demands such as an increase in wages for certain groups of workers. The definite class strike of a revolutionary character, with the aim of superseding the present capitalist form of society, will rouse all the latent antagonism and powers of resistance of the non-proletarian classes, and under any normally conceivable situation in the Western nations seems to be condemned to failure from the very start. 26

L'ENVOI

1. General Strikes must be sympathy strikes and their purpose eminently clear to a very large percentage of the workers involved.
2. General Strikes must have a terminal date as well as a declaration date. Otherwise Communist interference in duration or aim is probable.
3. Smoothness and speed of communication between strike units are basic.
4. Citizens' Committees act as buffers more often than as umpires.
5. As General Strikes multiply, Citizens' Committees grow more common.
6. As the military increases in use and power, so does the General Strike become more desperate, and the need of public support more urgent.
7. A General Strike may be transformed by change of aim, but seldom from revolutionary to conservative. Communists, like hawks, pounce upon potential revolution.
8. Unprepared General Strikes at this juncture of world history are both callous and stupid.
9. As the General Strike occasionally accomplishes its aims, pressures will grow to abolish it. This trend may be counterbalanced by experiment. The achievement and preservation of public rights may guarantee a longer lease on life for the General Strike than now seems likely.

PART IV

APPENDIX

Thumbnail Sketches of General Strikes
Not Recorded in Previous Chapters

AFRICA

Egypt
1946 A United Press wire from Cairo on March 3, 1946, indicated expectation of a 'day of mourning' for Egyptians who died in the anti-British riots on February 21, 1946. Premier Ismail Sidkey Pasha placed a ban on all demonstration, since previous general strikes had ended in violence. Youth leaders of the Wafdist opposition party announced defiance of the ban. To go back in history, pressure by Egyptian nationalists had brought a declaration by Britain that Egypt was an independent state, February 28, 1922. British troops were evacuated from Cairo and Alexandria in 1946, but not from the Suez Canal or the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The Wafdists won the election of 1942 and the control of government until dismissed by the king. In 1945 the Premier of a coalition cabinet (except Wafdists) was assassinated. In that involved political situation of uncertainty the 1946 protest general strike was planned.

Approximately 130,000 out of 650,000 Egyptian workers were organized into some 450 groups, all very small. (Only since 1950 have they been permitted to form industrial federations.) Fanatic nationalist groups (Muslim Brotherhood) have more influence within Egypt's unions than do overt Communists. Many Egyptian unionists are unpopular in their own country, as they are felt to be unduly affected by "foreign" ideas.¹ As expected, March 4 saw a paralyzing general strike, called by the National Committee on Labor, Students and Political Leaders. The strike was planned on a nation-wide basis to reinforce the demand for complete sovereignty over the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, as well as to protest the riot victims of February 21.²

Egypt
August 15, 1956 Government-controlled Egyptian trade unions called a general strike of twenty-four-hour duration for August 16. This call was in protest against a London Conference of twenty-two nations concerned over the international control of the Suez Canal. This Conference had been convened by the United States, Great Britain and France. The International Federation of Arab trade unions ordered that the general strike should occur throughout the Arab world. Egyptian workers gave complete backing to the twenty-four hour strike. Walkouts and demonstrations occurred in Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Libya. In some instances there were only one-hour sympathy strikes.³

As far as organization is concerned, Cairo is the center of the Arab world. Both the International Federation of Arab Labor Unions and the National Liberation Front are centered in Cairo and are left wing in philosophy, if not actually Communist. Hence more than one call for an Arab-wide general strike has been issued from Cairo.

Gold Coast Perhaps the most surprising thing about the general strike in Africa is the relatively few actually recorded. In fact, however, it should be recognized how predominantly rural are all but the Northern and Southernmost portions of Africa. Usually one connects the general strike with some degree of industrialism. In the case of the Gold Coast, industry on any large scale is still in the future. Yet the main money crop, cocoa, with a handful of American or British educated Negro leaders, together are likely to yield an intensely interesting experiment in the grafting of modern democracy upon the ancient stem of tribal life and Juju. Barely 10 per cent of the population are literate; so the modern, young political leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah, intentionally live much more closely to their people than did the old white and native officials of the earlier British colonial days.

Unlike most one-crop colonial territories, the Gold Coast has, under Nkrumah, been grimly saving the necessary capital that can modernize the country and bring to its people a healthier and perhaps more satisfying life. With a population almost 100 per cent Negro, modern political psychology and ancient tribal tradition have to be mingled with care and knowledge to achieve more than temporary progress. How successful Nkrumah has been in this tightrope walking can be seen in the story of the Gold Coast general strike of 1949.

Born over forty-five years ago on the Gold Coast, son of a goldsmith and a storekeeper, Nkrumah was educated in Roman Catholic mission schools, in Achimota College and then at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, at the University of Pennsylvania and in London, England. Dr. Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast late in 1947, to take part in the development of the U. G. C. C. (United Gold Coast Convention). Dr. Nkrumah found himself at odds with many of his U. G. C. C. colleagues, chiefly over the fact that the broadest basis of suffrage was not proposed, because, said the older leaders, the people were not yet ready for it.

A struggle with foreign store owners over the rising prices

of the few goods the Gold Coast natives desired ended with Negro veterans being killed by the police. This roused such anger along the Gold Coast that much rioting occurred, and looting in the larger stores. The U.G.C.C. leaders petitioned London by cable to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. This was done by the British government, but the Gold Coast Governor arrested the leaders, and banished them to Northern territories, where they were separately incarcerated. When the Watson Commission sat, the imprisoned leaders were released to give evidence. The Commission reported that the old Constitution was outmoded. When the Governor appointed a constitutional committee of forty Africans, old and upper-class chiefs were chosen, and the younger leaders ignored. Dr. Nkrumah formed a youth committee and had them travel throughout the nation to rouse interest in universal suffrage, a fully elected legislature, and a representative cabinet. By this time a split had developed in the U.G.C.C. and a new organization, the Convention Peoples' party (C.P.P.) was established by Dr. Nkrumah with the purpose of starting a Gold Coast general strike. It was not so termed, but was referred to as "positive action based on non-violence," and was much akin to Gandhi's "civil disobedience" in Natal in 1913 and British India in 1930-31.

Gold Coast 1949

After some considerable negotiation between the government and Nkrumah, country-wide civil disobedience started on January 8, 1949. No one worked; buses and trucks were silent. Continuance of water, electricity and health services was agreed upon by the C. P. P. leaders. For twenty-one days this continued. Then Nkrumah and his leading colleagues were charged with sedition and imprisoned. The 1951 election for the Legislative Assembly gave Nkrumah thirty-five seats out of the thirty-eight involved. Thus the prisoner became the head of a dominant party, and ultimately the Premier of the Gold Coast. Not many general strikes in other parts of the world have contributed to such a reversal of power.⁴

On March 6, 1957, the Gold Coast became the independent nation of Ghana within the British Commonwealth. Ahead are grave problems of unity, since the Ashanti Province has an opposition party (N. L. M. — National Liberation Movement) with extreme states' rights theories. It is Nkrumah's task to unify the new nation of Ghana without dictatorship or civil war,

and time may show that the general strike is a weapon relatively preferable to civil war.⁵

North Africa
1952

Independence of Tunisia and Morocco from the French "protectorate" has been a common base for general strikes of one to three days' duration and for bloody riots preceding or following the general strike action. The trouble in 1952 started in Tunisia, where workers planned for a one-day general strike on February 1 to celebrate "the day of Tunisian independence." It is reported that Nationalist leaders warned their followers not to provoke any new clashes with the French authorities. Among the leaders of the Tunisian nationalists was Farhat Hached, Secretary-General of the Tunisian Labor Federation. His leadership of 100,000 Tunisian workers gave the nationalist movement contact with the masses. His union was also influential in blocking progress of the Communists with North African labor.

Whether the deed were done by a personal enemy, by French fanatics, or by members of the Communist party, Hached was assassinated on December 5. A three-day strike in mourning for Hached was carried out in Tunis. This unexplained assassination led to a twenty-four hour strike in Casablanca, Moroccan city of half a million people. As riots erupted, police and troops laid siege to more than two thousand Moroccan Union members barricaded in the headquarters of the Moroccan General Labor Confederation. Though the union members bombarded the troops with bricks from their building, by nightfall the soldiers had prevented the demonstration from spreading into other European quarters of the city. Even so, four Europeans were savagely murdered by the mob, and at least forty Arab demonstrators were killed by police troops. The French viewpoint was that if the United Nations had not heard the Arab complaints from Morocco and Tunis, hopes of complete independence would not have arisen.

North Africa
1954-1956

In 1954 Moroccan nationalists called for a three-day strike to protest French rule, and to commemorate Sultan Mohammed Ben Youssef, whom the French had deposed in September, 1953, and had exiled to Madagascar. This was a typical use of the weapon.

A quite unusual call for a twenty-four hour general strike was made in October, 1955, by the French anti-reform colonists, known as the Présence Française, who greatly feared a

"sell-out" by the French government to the Moroccan nationalists. Though Moroccans took no part in this strike, it was almost completely effective as far as European business was concerned. In some areas industries and rail service suffered partial or total shutdown. The strike, however, did not affect the public services, although Europeans staff the key posts. "Squads of Présence Française militants had to circulate in the streets to make merchants close their shops."⁶

On July 4, 1956, Algerian "rebels" proclaimed a general strike for July 5. This strike was called by the National Liberation Front, with headquarters in Cairo. It received support of the Communist party and the General Union of Algerian Workers, and was complete in Algiers, but only partially effective elsewhere. "The strike showed that the rebels could at any moment paralyze the Algerian capital."⁷

ASIA

Arab Near East Syria, 1936

A N. Y. Times editorial of April 21, 1936, described the threat of Arab nationalists to use a general strike in Palestine. Following riots in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, they called on British authorities to stop Jewish immigration.⁸ All Syria was closed down when three million persons imposed upon themselves hunger and bankruptcy in an effort to throw off the French mandatory power (League of Nations). The general strike appeared to be the only adequate weapon. Albert Viton discovered that food could not be bought without an Arab friend, nor any services rendered. Martial law was declared, and every newspaper suppressed. This struggle lasted a month. This report makes the strike a little too complete and unswerving, but it offers a vivid picture of purpose and practice. Suffice it to add that the French were not seriously influenced.⁹ Eighteen years later it could be said of Syria that, while the General Federation of Labor counted over 60,000 members, there were only a few Communist union officers in all Syria. The official labor organ, The Worker, has a vigorous anti-Communist line.¹⁰

Arab Near East Palestine

Relations between Arab and Jewish inhabitants of Israel persist in a state of high tension. Three antagonisms underlie this fact. Moslem religious fanaticism is stirred easily against the

unbeliever. The conservatism of an economically backward group deepens the resistance of the Arab to the energetic, thrusting newcomer. A fast awakening nationalism in Africa and Asia makes the Arab a ready convert for his leaders' picture of the Jews as a menace to Arab unity.

Arab Near East
Palestine: 1936-1947

Nevertheless, Jewish immigrants have accomplished much for Palestine in scientific agriculture, harnessed water power and newly established industries. On an economic plane the Arabs cannot afford to be indifferent to this aspect. Rioting in Jaffa and Tel Aviv in late April, 1936, yielded to relative peace when Arab leaders decided to form committees in every town to organize general strikes. In Jaffa, Gaza, Hebron, Nablus, Jenin and the old city of Jerusalem, Arabs had been striking since April 20. Other cities were to follow suit. It was significant that the organizers of the strikes were almost entirely Arab youths. A fairly rigorous enforcement of the general strike was still evident after four days. The Arab demands were not met, any more than they were in Syria.¹¹ Twenty-eight days after the Palestine general strike started, the French Communist organ *l'Humanité* could report it as still in force in Jaffa with "violent measures of repression by the British." The press was censored. The Arabs, says the Communist sheet, fear that "sooner or later nothing will remain to them of their country."

A British decision announced in January, 1946, the resumption of Jewish immigration into Palestine at 1,500 a month. The Arabs held that to be a violation of the 1939 White Paper which set the Jewish immigration at a total of 75,000 more, a quota then filled, according to the Arabs. As a result, throughout Palestine a million Arabs ceased work in protest against British immigration policies. Arab and Jewish business both were at a standstill.¹² Similar Arab general strikes in Palestine took place in December, 1946, and October, 1947. A virtual state of civil war is typical, with an occasional general strike thrown in to underline the demands with an economic punch.¹³

Ceylon
August, 1953

The Ceylonese Communists sponsored a one-day strike on August 12, 1953, to protest the government's decision to reduce the rice subsidy. Violence, looting, and terrorism continued after the

strike was called off. Army forces with machine guns guarded Colombo in strategic places. The port of Colombo was at a standstill. The government decreed food and transport essential services, and made legal the arrest of those who incited to disaffection. Police arrested nearly 400 persons, including a South Ceylon Communist leader. Over twenty deaths occurred. The Communist Political Bureau asserted that "the strike is the beginning of a struggle to liberate Ceylon from the imperialists." Though the Communist party members in Ceylon do not exceed 2,000 out of a population of some seven millions, their organizational skill enabled them virtually to paralyze Colombo on August 12. The slight increase in price which resulted from the government's stoppage of the rice subsidy was probably balanced by the "dearness allowance" based on the official cost-of-living index. Nevertheless it was a keen point for the Communists to seize upon, and they made prompt capital of it. One of the most intriguing aspects of this demonstration general strike is the fact that Colombo's Communist leaders were said to be from high class families who were well-to-do.¹⁴

India

Background

Industrial development in India was insignificant until the first World War (800,000 employees in registered factories in 1912 out of a working population of about one hundred and fifty millions). The Indian working class is still predominantly agricultural, with manual labor and cattle-power on very small plots. Illiteracy and grinding poverty make organization difficult. Landless migration to industrial cities, when the latter were developed, gravely depressed industrial wage rates. World War II made organization of production imperative. Annual labor-management conferences (1940-42) helped to evolve a uniform labor code throughout the land. The Indian government set up a Labor Investigation Committee (1944) to collect data on wages, housing, etc., and to report on labor needs.

The Indian Trades Unions Act of 1926 and Trades Disputes Act of 1929, both based largely on British legislation, permitted registration of Trades Unions that had a constitution, a proper audit of accounts, and separation of the political and general union funds. Registered unions thus gained the right of corporate existence, immunity from prosecution for criminal conspiracy, and from civil claims arising out of acts of union agents. By 1920 there were 250,000 union members in 125 unions.

Communism in India dates from 1920, when a small number of Muslim students went to Tashkent and Moscow Universities. There they were trained for active, propagandist trade unionism in India, to which they returned, bringing with them violent strikes. Long trials (such as the Reichstag trial) failed to crush the Communist movement, which reached its peak in Indian labor in the years 1929-31. In that period membership of Communist unions rapidly rose during the great strikes of the time, only to fall as rapidly when the only uniting interest was the class struggle. In 1947 unions dissatisfied with the policies of the Communist-controlled All-India Trades Union Congress, set up another central federation, the Indian National Trades Union Congress.¹⁵

Bombay
November, 1938

A one-day general strike¹⁶ was called by the Bombay Provincial Trades Union Congress as a gesture of protest against the Industrial Disputes Bill, which had passed through all the readings in the Bombay Legislative Assembly. This bill made illegal strikes that took place before conciliation had been used, and required, as did the National Trades Disputes Act of 1929, a month's notice of a public utilities strike. On the Sunday before the general strike mass meetings were addressed by the leader of the India Labor party and the president of the Bombay Provincial T. U. C. The workers were exhorted to stay away from work on Monday. Plans were made by the "Council of Action" to picket every factory in the city of Bombay. "Peaceful persuasion" was organized to prevent men from going to work. On the other hand, several crowded meetings were held in which members of the Assembly answered questions on the bill. Police protection was pledged to workers if any attempt were made to intimidate them.

The actual strike, on Monday, was only partial, and in the morning even the mill area was relatively peaceful, the workers of only ten textile mills out of sixty-two actually quitting work. While city scavengers stayed home, all the markets were open. Rail workshops continued at work. Outside of Bombay city the appeal for a general strike fell flat. Inside the city, save for the textile mills, there was no stoppage of business activities or interruption of public services. Small shopkeepers on Monday afternoon were intimidated by mobs, and obeyed the order to close. When it was recognized that the general strike was a failure, violence developed, and the

police opened fire on strikers on three occasions. This was a general strike, or hartal as it is termed, which failed through the indifference of the workers whose "rights" were allegedly in peril from the Trades Disputes Bill. Where work ceased, it seems to have been largely a product of "peaceful persuasion," with inevitable accompanying violence.¹⁷

Bombay
August, 1950

Mob violence on the afternoon of Thursday, August 31, succeeded a quiet morning of a "general strike" called by the Socialist-led Hind-Mazdoor Sabha in sympathy with the fifteen-day old Bombay textile strike. Students had no part and seemingly no interest. Barely 25 per cent of the non-textile workers went out, but by afternoon 50 per cent of labor had ceased work. Stoning of trolley cars occurred, despite police and Home Guard protection. Meat, food and milk supplies were not affected, and 60 per cent of the lower grades of postal and telegraph services were at work. The auto industry reported 80 per cent at work. In the mill district meat shops and eating places were closed. The general conclusion by the authorities was that labor leaders incited followers to violence when they perceived that the general strike call was only partially obeyed.¹⁸

Calcutta
September, 1950

Under the Socialist auspices as was the August Bombay strike above, together with the Communist Bengal Province T. U. C. and the left-wing Socialist United Trades Union Congress, a general strike was called for September 12, in sympathy with Bombay Textile Union's strike. Police made several arrests on September 10, under the Preventive Detention Act, in connection with the one-day hartal planned for September 12. The strike was confined to some engineering plants and the Barasat-Bashirat Light Railway. There was no effect on the jute mills or the banking operations. "The normal busy life of the city remained uninterrupted. Trams and buses plied regularly; shops and bazaars were open, attendance in mercantile and Government offices was normal and educational institutions functioned as usual. All trams were, however, withdrawn from service by 7:45 p. m."¹⁹

Calcutta
May, 1952

"The most spectacular hartal was observed in Calcutta and the districts on Wednesday, May 7, as a mark of protest against the Railway regrouping." The new system, put into effect a month before, involved

the loss to Calcutta of its importance as headquarters of the famed East Indian Railway. Seventeen business organizations affiliated with the Bengal Trades Association urged the public to support the hartal. Dr. S. P. Mukerjee, president of the Citizens' Protest Committee on Rail Regrouping, announced that the hartal would start at 5 a. m. and close at 4 p. m. Medical, hospital, gas, light and water, and scavenger services would be undisturbed. Life in Calcutta came to a complete standstill. Crowds lay on the railway tracks so that no trains could run. Port, trams, buses, state transport service, all were paralyzed, and the airport services affected. Many outgoing planes left without passengers because of the difficulty of transportation from the city to the airport. Boats and steam ferries across the Hooghly were immobilized. Trucks from the country could not enter the city until 4 p. m. Neither drinks nor cigarettes could be bought by travelers on the Grand Truck Road. The Bamungachi engine shed, which pulsates with activity for twenty-four hours a day, was dead silent. Shops and bazaars were closed. Taxi stands were deserted and private cars kept off the street. Even Dr. Mukerjee's car was halted by young pickets who did not recognize the leader of the hartal. When he was ordered out of his car someone recognized him, and he approved the aid the young volunteers were rendering. It was established that about a million workers, students, shopkeepers and office workers ceased work. A Calcutta editorial commented that the combination of the Indian Communist party and the Hindu Mahasabha, "which are poles asunder," was in itself a telling indication of the feeling roused in that part of the country by the regrouping system.²⁰ This Calcutta hartal, like those reported below, supports the view, expressed in the chapter on Trends, that a successful general strike must have a purpose that appeals to more than the particular unions involved in the strike call. Further samples of this "popular" general strike occurred in 1955 and 1956.

Goa and State Reorganization

The three Portuguese enclaves in Indian territory have long been bones of contention with Nehru's government. When, therefore, in August, 1955, a political invasion of Goa by "non-violent" bands of Hindu volunteers led to the shooting of over a dozen Hindu demonstrators by the Portuguese police, vast mobs took possession of Bombay and New Delhi, and forced a general strike of protest upon those cities. All factories and mills closed and trade and transportation were at a standstill.²¹

Prime Minister Nehru held that peaceful resistance, after the pattern of Gandhi, had to be led by mature and tested men, and that mass efforts to enter the territory of Goa would inevitably invite violence.

Similar riots in Bombay occurred in November, 1955, and January, 1956, over the political issue of creating a Federal District out of the great city of Bombay. India has a dozen major languages and hundreds of dialects. Many lingual groups desired the lines of Indian states redrawn on the basis of language. Nehru now recognizes that such a rearrangement might well weaken the sense of Indian national unity. For this reason the Communist party has become a fervid advocate of linguistic lines as a means of easily whipping up discontent against Nehru.²² Both major language groups of Western India, the Gujarati and the Marathi, wanted Bombay to be their capital city. The compromise of a Federal District satisfied neither group. The mill workers of Bombay are largely Marathi-speaking. The leftist unions called for a general strike in both November and January. In the latter strike mob violence lasted for three days.

Business life in Bombay was virtually halted. The streets of the commercial areas were almost devoid of activity. Since trains and buses were not running, those who usually worked there could not get through.²³ Thus for three days the industrial and commercial life of Bombay was crippled. Strangely enough, most of the destruction caused by the mob was in the districts where the striking mill workers lived.²⁴

Simultaneously a non-violent general strike was called in Calcutta over the reorganization of the borders of the states of Bengal and Bihar. Here factories, stores, rail transportation and much of the telephone and telegraph communications ceased to function. Orissa and Patna were similarly crippled for like reasons.²⁵ A further outbreak in Calcutta occurred in February, without violence, and in protest against the proposal to merge the states of Bihar and Bengal.²⁶ A third strike occurred in July, 1956, for much the same purpose, organized by the combined "Leftist parties," and paralyzed Calcutta for ten hours.²⁷

Indonesia This vast area has a complicated story of imperial-
Background ism (Dutch) and slow reforms for the
 benefit of the native population. In 1922 the is-
lands were made a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In
1925 the Surabaya metal industry (extractive) was in a rather

early stage of development. Twenty-nine different concerns employed over 11,000 workers. Wages were back at 1920 level and all bonuses had disappeared. At the same time, trade unions had been growing, mainly under Communist leadership. One such union with 2,000 membership had as its president a man appointed by the Central Administration of the Communist party of Indonesia (then Dutch East Indies). A strike started with the dismissal of a worker charged with spreading Communist propaganda. "Preventive arrest" of twenty ringleaders took place with house-to-house search by the police. The Communists were charged with leading the agitation with a view to converting the dispute into a general strike which would spread from the East to the West of Java. How disturbed employers were at the growth of union power can be seen by their exclusion from employment of all who could read and write, on the ground that partly educated workers were the easiest prey for Communist influence.²⁸

The Japanese captured the Dutch East Indies in 1942, and held them until Japan's surrender. The Dutch tried to regain power and had to fight a new "Indonesian Republic." Settlements were made and broken, and the U.N. twice intervened. Finally an agreement of 1949 recognized the Netherlands and Indonesia as sovereign, independent nations, joined together in the person of the Queen of the Netherlands. In April of 1950, 10,000 to 15,000 workers walked out in and around Surabaya, in a general strike.

This general strike, called by the Federation of Indonesian Labor on April 18, 1950, for one day's duration, was an attempt at self-assertion and recognition, in protest against the dismissal of 240 workers black-listed as union organizers by the five large industrial concerns. Government intervention led to a week-long suspension of the general strike order, pending negotiations with the manufacturers. A Conciliation Board was created with three representatives of the employers and three of the union.

Management agreed to reinstate the dismissed workers. Negotiations were to continue with the Federation of Indonesian Labor demanding: recognition of unions; collective bargaining; holidays with pay; minimum wage rates twice that already prevailing. The manufacturers felt that the Federation was "tainted with radicalism" and was fomenting industrial unrest. The outcome was agreement on 2.60 florins a day (demand had been 4.50) and a free lunch. This threat of a general strike

brought prestige to the Federation of Labor circles. Its leaders were Indonesians, but it was not known with what party they were affiliated. It was held to be the first successful demonstration of the strength of organized labor in East Java. On August 10, 1954, after some four years of uneasy partnership, Indonesia and the Netherlands signed agreements to dissolve their union.²⁹

Iraq
1931

A general strike in July, 1931, in the city of Baghdad was caused by an income tax three times the normal. Strikers demanded a revision downwards of the taxes; a dole for all unemployment; guaranty of re-employment for all workers who had been discharged by the Iraq Railways (nationally owned) and the Iraq Petroleum Company; that the cabinet resign, and the opposition be called to power. The strike seemed more effective than it really was, as cabs and buses operated, and the small business men transferred their stores to their houses. In answer to the strikers' demands Nuri Pasha announced that violence would be severely punished; mention of a strike was banned in letters, telegrams, telephone conversations or discussion in the streets; taxes assessed against nineteen different classes of workers would be abolished. Scores of plain clothes police were put into the streets and made arrests of those discussing the general strike. By July 20 the strike was over in Baghdad, but spread to Basrah, where mobs looted stores that did not close. Those most responsible for these troubles were temporarily deported to a small town on the Euphrates.

Iraq

December, 1956

Twenty-five years later Arab lands tried to bring pressure to bear on Nuri as-Said, Iraqi premier, by demonstration general strikes in Jordan, Syria and Egypt. The call for a general strike was issued from Cairo by the Permanent Bureau of the Arab Countries Political Parties' Conference (an evident Communist front) in protest against the arrest of the president of the Iraqi bar. Street crowds shouted anti-Baghdad Pact slogans.³⁰

Shanghai

May, 1919

When the news came through from France that President Woodrow Wilson had agreed to let the Japanese invaders remain in the Chinese province of Shantung, the students heard that their own government had consented to the deal. At this news the school and college students, strongly nationalistic in viewpoint, went out on strike.

In this action the students were following tradition. When the government erred in the eyes of the people, the latter ceased to work. There was, therefore, no parental pressure on the students, and before long all Chinese educational establishments were shut down. Factory and railroad workers followed suit, and even the government employees ceased work. Finally the merchants shut their shops and boarded their windows. Whether this was to honor the student patriots or to protect their property from street mobs we are not told. What matters, however, is the significant fact that the Chinese government never signed the Paris treaty.³¹

Shanghai
June, 1925

In a sense this, too, was a political strike and an international one in purpose and cause. In Shanghai by 1925 something approaching a labor class had been built up by seasonal or permanent industrialized workers. At that period the average Chinese centered his interests in his family, and even the employees, craftsmen or industrial laborers were looked upon by their employers as something akin to their own families. Injustices that would have aroused employees of foreign "bosses" were endured as part of tradition. But with Japanese or whites the industrial relationship was far from friendly. So marked was this difference that the Shanghai Chinese employers were willing to cooperate with their Chinese employees in order to damage or eliminate their foreign competitors.³²

Sun Yat Sen's Kuomintang party was strongly nationalistic, and at first somewhat influenced with Communist ideas. Too often it allowed unknown men to become trade union leaders, and this was true of Shanghai in May, 1925. There was, for example, no strike fund accounting, though something under one million dollars was contributed. In this lack of responsibility the labor leaders were not unlike other Chinese administrators, but this did not soften the suspicions of the Shanghai worker, and may have been a cause for the strike's ultimate weakening.

Shanghai, the largest city and port in China, in 1925 had a population of over one and one half millions, of which about twenty thousand were foreigners, mostly Japanese. In the International Settlement, as distinct from the Chinese city, there were about a million, of which 22,000 were foreign. Powers of self-government conferred upon this foreign community by various treaties included police control, sanitary engineering, markets, and the levy of taxes. Almost 90 per cent of such

taxes fell upon the Chinese residents of the Settlement, though they had no representation upon its municipal council. Shanghai was the headquarters of two important labor organizations. The Federation of Labor Unions included some thirty-seven unions. The National Labor Association was the child of the Kuomintang, established in May, 1925. The rivalry for leadership in the general strike of that summer brought them into conflict with the authorities, caused their expulsion from the Settlement in September, and their subsequent dissolution by the Chinese authorities.³³

One-sixth of the textile mills of China at that period were owned by Japanese. Of these, one-third were located in Shanghai. Early in May, 1925, Chinese workers in the Nagai Mills struck for a wage increase. Six other mills shut down in sympathy. In part the strike was due to dismissal of certain trade union spokesmen. In the past, violent outbreaks by Chinese workers against Japanese mill overseers had caused the Shanghai mills to arm their foremen. Hence, when the dispute broke out, the management opened fire and killed a Chinese employee.³⁴

Indignation rose. The Chinese students, foot-free leaders of revolt against injustice, especially when it was committed by foreigners, had their protest demonstration broken up and several of their colleagues arrested by the police. The Municipal Council of the International Settlement had made no investigation into the death of the Chinese worker. This arrest brought demonstrating students into the Settlement itself. Students mobbed the police station as their colleagues were taken in, and in turn were arrested. Tempers rose, police used sticks and batons freely, as the crowd began to cry, "Kill the Foreigners." The order to fire was given by the police inspector, and Chinese and Sikh police fired, killing four outright and wounding many. Because the student class possessed considerable prestige, this act led to a declaration of a general strike for June 1, a call supported even by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Here was a general strike aimed at foreigners with support from both worker and employer.³⁵

The Shanghai Municipal Council, with its American chairman, retaliated with a declaration of martial law, calling out the volunteers, all of whom were foreign residents. Sailors and marines went ashore from twenty-two foreign naval ships in the harbor. Meanwhile, the city was plastered with posters, "Drive the Imperialists Out," and "Boycott the Foreigner."

On the first day mobs attacked any tramcars whose drivers were unwilling to strike. On the second day 3,000 workers in the Electrical Department of the Municipality quit work. The foreign permanent staff, with the aid of 100 Russians, took their places. By June 3 business was at a standstill. Next day all Chinese workers on the foreign press joined the walk-out. In the meantime the fire hose was used on the mob and several Chinese were shot. Shanghai was literally paralyzed by the strike. From chauffeurs to bankers, the Chinese quit. At the end of the first week the wharf coolies and the Chinese seamen went out — even on the river steamers, the main method of commercial transportation.³⁶

The Chinese demands included the abolition of the extraterritorial rights held by foreigners, eligibility of Chinese for the Municipal Council, and freedom of speech and press for all Chinese residents of the Settlement. The majority were political, if not revolutionary, in tenor, and even the one plainly economic demand had political kick in its tail — "Complete reinstatement of all foreigners' Chinese employees with pay for the strike period." Nothing was said about back pay or reinstatement for strikers with Chinese employers.³⁷

A diplomatic commission from Peking (Peiping) in its report censured the chairman of the Municipal Council, and demanded the dismissal of the chief of police. This report was so shocking to the Council and to the Shanghai Consular Body that they had it suppressed, but not before it reached the Paris and Tokyo press, and had been published in the Chinese papers. Sympathy strikes spread up the Yangtze River to Hong Kong and Canton. By that time the general strikes had taken on the guise of definite economic boycotts of British and Japanese trade.

As retaliation the Municipal Council on July 6 cut off all electric power from Chinese mills, which had been running during the strike. The reason given was the Electric Department's loss of all their Chinese workers to the strike. The hope expressed at that time by the Council was that the Chinese workers now jobless from the shut-down of Chinese mills would soon be fighting with the Chinese employees who had received unemployment pay of foreign employers; this because the General Labor Union would be unable to give strike pay to the much larger number.

By the end of July the Chinese government in Peking ordered the arrest of the Labor Union's president, who fled to Canton.

In mid-August the Japanese mills settled with their employees. The British mills were the last to resume, in late September. Settlement terms had included a recognition of the workers' union, a wage increase and payment in Mexican dollars. Millions of dollars daily had been lost by the strike-boycott. To the end the Municipal Council showed no sense of its position in the eyes of the Chinese. It sent a check for \$75,000 as "a compassionate grant" to the victims of the strike riots. The Peking government rather naturally ordered it returned as a totally inadequate method of settlement.

Shanghai
February, 1927 A "surprise general strike" was organized by the Cantonese and Communists, according to the British, to celebrate the success of the Nationalist Army (Cantonese) just North of Shanghai. Marshall Sun Chuan-fang's defeated army threatened to engulf Shanghai in its retreat. The many foreigners in that city hoped that before the battle rolled into their precincts the Nationalist leader, General Chiang Kai-shek, would come to terms with the British Chargé d'Affaires. (The Nationalists, or the Kuomintang, were at that time still advised by the Communists, with whom the break was not made until 1928.) Shanghai workers had shown their sympathy with the Nationalists and their army, and this opportunity to weaken their own province in favor of the Kuomintang was gladly accepted.

On February 18, 1927, some 500 union delegates attended a meeting called by the Shanghai General Labor Union, and by unanimous vote approved of starting a general strike on the next day. It was generally agreed that the purpose was celebration of the victory of the Nationalists, but some leaders admitted that it was also a protest against the British armed forces who were in Shanghai or its harbor. The Labor Union issued a list of its demands, which included the elimination of military governors, the formation of a people's government, freedom of speech, an eight-hour day, higher wages, and recognition of the unions.

The strike started promptly, some 80,000 workers quitting on the first day, in the cotton mills, the post office, the street-car service, power and water services in the Chinese city. The seamen and wharf coolies added to the striking masses. Shanghai's police chief warned the strikers that instant execution (beheading) would be the penalty for "agitation," whether the "agitator" were student or coolie. Anyone caught with a Communist leaflet on him was ipso facto food for the

executioner's sword. Approximately a hundred met death that way during the five days of the strike. At its peak the number of strikers was conservatively estimated as 112,000 by the N. Y. Times, whereas Professor Wei Lin put it as high as 400,000. Thousands of these strikers were still in debt for the general strike of 1925, and there appears to have been no strike pay. The mill hands went back to work first. For a day or two, as groups returned to work, others came out for the first time. Finally, having celebrated or protested enough, the Labor Union called off the strike on the fifth day, February 24. The police chief simultaneously cancelled his order to execute agitators.³⁸

Singapore
June, 1955

At this time Singapore, largest city in the Malayan Peninsula, was still a British Crown Colony, surrounded by the Malayan Federation. Fifty per cent of the population of the Federation were Malayan and 38 per cent Chinese, while Singapore was at least 70 per cent Chinese, the largest Chinese population of any city in Southeast Asia. Since June, 1948, British and other troops had been stationed in the area to cope with Communist guerrillas. In Singapore city the Communists welded the Chinese students into a disciplined group that intimidated its teachers and the non-Communist students. When the Communist agents desired disorder, the Chinese student body in Singapore created it. The immediate grievance of the unions that started the general strike in June, 1955, was a seven-week strike of 1,300 harbor clerks who desired higher wages. A twenty-four hour sympathy strike was called for June 13, but the union leaders agreed to postpone it pending more negotiations. Then came the arrest of six union leaders who were suspected by the British intelligence service of being key Communist agents of the Crown Colony. In protest against these arrests the strike order went forth again, this time with indefinite duration. The strike actually lasted until June 17, then was called off to give the government time to review the cases of the arrested men.

Public transport was completely tied up, taxis and private cars being the only alternative, and by noon of June 13 the traffic was in chaotic condition. Chinese workers left their jobs on the docks, but shops remained open, and food supplies moved normally. The government estimated 16,000 strikers, the union put it at 70,000, the total working force being about 120,000. There was evident political purpose in the strike. A resolution adopted by the Singapore Assembly some two

weeks earlier had stated their determination to end colonial rule. The British Colonial Secretary, on a tour of Southeast Asia, could give no earlier hope of independence for Singapore than four or five years. David Marshall, new Chief Minister of the Crown Colony, had his difficulties with the British Colonial Secretary and the Governor on the one side, and with the Communists on the other. The first efforts of the latter were to discredit Chief Minister Marshall, "since he is the type of person most repugnant and dangerous to them — a radical reformer, democratically elected, who is willing to abide by the Constitution and may steal their thunder." (Marshall resigned his post June 7, 1956.) The Communist hope was to trap Mr. Marshall's government into conflict with the people, which would turn the popular feeling against the government. The press reported little or no violence during the general strike, though there had been much rioting by students some weeks before. Marshall had accused the union leaders of "disgraceful abuse of the power of the strike for no legitimate trade union reasons."

Wages in Singapore are low, and there is a great deal of poverty side by side with enormous wealth. As an outcome of threats and intimidation, the Chinese population of the city will do nothing to antagonize the Communist leaders. The Communist influence in most Singapore unions continues to spread, as seen by the rapid growth of the large General Factory and Shop Workers Union, said to be controlled by "Party-liners."

AUSTRALASIA

Australia The growth and decline of the Communist party in Australia has taken place without the declaration of an actual general strike, but with many prolonged industrial disputes, and with the peculiarly Australian phenomenon, the "rolling strike" (first one industry or city and then another). The Australian Labor party is both the political voice of the trade unions and the largest party with historical continuity. In the twenties the Communists had little effective power in the Australian labor movement. As the thirties began, the party relentlessly attacked the "labor reformists," and promoted and prolonged all possible labor disputes, as, for example, the fifteen-month coal strike of 1929-1930. The Communists utilized to the utmost the discontent of the Great Depression.

The era of Germany's attack on Russia brought with it the world-wide effort of Communism to obtain affiliation with the various labor movements. At first this failed in Australia, but the Communist practice of training young worker groups who would become trade unionists often ended in the Communist control of existing unions. Ruthless suppression of all strikes by the Communist leaders and members in the ranks marked this period, as it did in other nations.

In 1945, when the war with Germany ended, the Communist party "controlled the policies of trade unions in every basic industry, with the exception of agriculture."⁴⁰ It was thereby in greater power than in any other English-speaking nation. As soon as the Soviet Union was out of peril, with the surrender of Japan, the Communists turned their energies to divide Great Britain and the United States, with consequent difficulties for the Australian labor movement. Strikes rapidly increased. Led by Communists, the basic industries (power, steel, coal, shipping, etc.) were in turmoil, defying the Australian Labor party and the Australian Trade Union Council. During this period the "rolling strike" was the favorite weapon.

Against the growth of Communist power within the key unions Australian labor slowly began to build its opposition. Exposure of Communist election frauds, misuse of union funds, and party-trade union relations, aided this awakening. The Federal Arbitration Court, the federal government, and the non-Communist labor movement had to exert united efforts to break the Communist hold. The Federal Arbitration Court gave priority to hearings on Communist frauds in union elections. From 1949 the party lost power in the Australian labor movement. The Court was utilized to obtain honest balloting in unions, and some of the heaviest voting in union history occurred at this period. As a result, political strikes have virtually disappeared. "Tolerance of Communists as merely of a different political philosophy has given way to distrust."

Australia

February, 1912

Brisbane streetcar men were fired for wearing union buttons. A sympathetic general strike was declared on Wednesday, January 31, 1912. The port's shipping, tram and railroad services were all paralyzed. Union men came out willingly and "peaceful persuasion" was used on others. The hooligan element forced shopkeepers to close, and broke a few windows. Labor "peace officers" with badges and authority were sent into the streets to maintain order. Permits were issued by the strike

committee for essential transport. These two facts implied that the strikers had assumed local authority. All troops were Federal; Queensland had no force of its own. Special constables were enrolled and police from other cities called in. Federal Premier Fisher said that both Queensland government and Brisbane strike committee had asked for his aid; that he had refused aid to the state government.

At this point, the citizens, annoyed by the permits and the labor police, began to organize their own protection. They swarmed into the police offices to enroll as special constables. On the first Monday of the strike armed farmers and bushmen rode into town. This was the turning point of the strike, and from then on the authority of the Trades Hall (labor headquarters) began to weaken. On February 10 a general election brought the downfall of the Federal Labor Government. The anonymous, conservative historian of this strike expressed the opinion that a "considerable section of the community seemed to be on the verge of an actual revolution."⁴¹ When food scarcity developed, the strike leaders were alleged to have commented "Better to steal than to starve." At the end of February the Arbitration Court gave its decision that transit workers could wear union buttons! The strike officially ended March 6. It failed for lack of preparation and real grievance. It roused a powerful citizen opposition. The results of an effective strike hit union members and their families before it hurt the middle class.

New Zealand The Trades Union Congress tried to organize a
June, 1950 general strike on the first day of Parliament in 1950, in protest against the government's decision to remove all subsidies from food items, which resulted in a rise in certain prices. The Federation of Labor declined the invitation of the T. U. C. to join in sponsoring the demonstration, considering it a futile gesture, and alleging that the strike plan was initiated by the Communist party. Actually no demonstration occurred in the city of Wellington, and T. U. C. efforts in obtaining at least token strikes elsewhere produced revolts in several unions that were members of the T. U. C. Secret ballots revealed that an overwhelming majority opposed the general strike proposal. Only in the cities of Auckland and Greymouth did any demonstration take place, and there a walk-out was poorly supported by the Waterside workers.⁴²

EUROPE

Czecho-Slovakia
February, 1948

After grave sufferings under Nazi occupation in World War II, a three-hundred-member Constituent Assembly was elected by the Czech people. One hundred and fourteen of the members were Communist. Communist Gottwald formed a six-party coalition government. On February 23-25, 1948, the Communists brought off a bloodless seizure of government, with a one-hour demonstration general strike on the twenty-fourth.

The demands of the Communists involved the destruction of what private enterprise remained: they included the full nationalization of all wholesale trade, all department stores, all printing and publishing plants, all hospitals and sanatoria, the production and distribution of drugs, all export and import, and all industries with more than fifty employees. Communist leaders admitted that this group of demands abolished the agreement under which postwar Czecho-Slovakia was to nationalize the key industries, but to leave commerce and small industry to private business.

Premier Gottwald at the convention of factory delegates repeated his instructions to his party members to organize "action committees of the National Front" in factory towns, villages and districts. The convention in question did not represent those establishments whose nationalization Gottwald and the Communists demanded. At the same time, Gottwald made it clear enough that he would not accept back into his cabinet any of the ministers of the "National Front" who had resigned, but whose resignations President Benes had not at that time accepted. Following elections in which the Communists and their supporters were unopposed, President Benes resigned, and he died in September of the same year. Gottwald became the President. 43

Finland

On March 1, 1956, the people of Finland felt the rigors of a general strike for the first time since 1917, when Finland obtained its freedom from Russia. The field of the nineteen-day struggle lay mainly between the Trades Unions and the Finnish farmers. The Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1941 had tied wages to the cost-of-living index. In mid-December, 1955, that act was repealed. In January, 1956, by arbitrary action the producers fixed milk and dairy prices at a

percentage above market-place, unsubsidized prices. The average all-dairy price was 18 per cent above the market-place. To offset this cut in real wages the Trades Unions demanded of their employers from 6 to 7 per cent pay increase, with a basic rise of 12 Finnish marks. This, or a general strike.

The farmers retaliated, threatening no deliveries if the strike materialized. Within two hours of the commencement of the strike this threat was put into effect. Two hundred thousand trade unionists and some 700,000 unorganized workers were involved in the walkout. Mail deliveries ceased and newspapers were not printed. Finland's vital industries were paralyzed, and railroads came to a stop.⁴⁴ The essential public services — phones, gas, electricity, hospitals, and fire protection — continued; but dairies limited deliveries to the infants and the aged. Gasoline stations served cars that displayed on their windshields a Strike Permit. March 6 saw some violence break out as autos, taxis, and buses were overturned, and gas stations closed.⁴⁵

The government (a new President had been elected just before the outbreak of the strike) attempted to end the disastrous economic dispute by setting up an Arbitration Commission. By the sixteenth day of the strike the employers were ready to concede a 6 per cent wage increase, but by that time the unions had new demands. The talks stalled. The nineteenth day, however, saw most workers back at work and the strike ended, except for the newspaper printers. The N. Y. Times contended that this "was a strike that nobody wanted and nobody thought would take place." Labor had expected that it would gain its wage increases without any walkout.⁴⁶

This strike "...forced the government to accede in all respects to the demands of the unions. In a highly stratified economy like the Finnish, the use of the general strike to obtain a general increase in wages or a modification of the division of the national revenue is in fact contrary to the Constitution, for it removes the power of decision from Parliament and the government." (*Italics added.*)⁴⁷

Greece

May, 1936

A tobacco workers' strike in Northern Greece culminated in an almost complete general strike lasting some days, paralyzing business and transportation. The strike was a protest against the shooting of civilian rioters by gendarmerie. A belated and unsuccessful effort was made to extend the strike to Athens. The government

mobilized the railroad men, and so kept the railroads running. The highways were barricaded by the strikers. Eyewitnesses attested presence of Communists in the strike crowds. This is supported by the prompt use by strikers of the "blood of the martyrs" motif in order to stir more trouble. (See Chapter XVII.)

Normally, tobacco picking has been done by families of the growers. The Greek government had been settling refugees in Northern Greece, granting them licenses to pick tobacco. The job was relatively well paid because seasonal. In the off season these pickers were huddled into the towns and were more open to Communist propaganda than the original pickers, rural families of the tobacco growers. Advantage of organization to workers, as shown by the wages of licensed tobacco pickers, was recognized by low-paid textile workers of Salonika who participated in the general strike.

Greece Armed bands representing conflicting political
June, 1946 ideologies caused the government to introduce, and Parliament to approve, laws with the death penalty for action against the state. The government set up summary civil and military courts throughout Greece. A general strike was proclaimed in protest for June 18, 1946, by the Greek Federation of Labor, and was supported by Communist and affiliated parties. Relatively few workers obeyed orders to cease work, and there was no interference with normal services. 48

Greece The second day of a forty-eight hour general
December, 1949 strike called by the General Confederation of Labor in order to gain a 40 per cent pay raise met with failure. Some employees in banks and telecommunications remained absent, but work in industries, utility companies, and the trades continued as usual. Athens broadcasting staff, on strike for several days, returned to work. 49

Holland Boycott of "yellow" (non-union) workers and the mer-
1903 chandise which they had been handling on ships or rail had been disturbing Dutch business and commerce early in January, 1903. At that period, because of the strength in the Dutch labor movement of both anti-political Syndicalists and Anarchists, almost any wharf strike threatened to become generalized throughout the port. A rail strike occurred on January 30 which bid fair to become general over the whole nation. A general strike of all trades was proposed, so the

railroad authorities yielded, pledging the union men that they would not have to work with the "yellow" labor. A great number of workers thereupon joined the various unions, feeling an important victory had been won.

The labor triumph was short-lived. Amsterdam water, telephone service, hydraulic cranes in the port, and public buildings all involved the employment by the city of some 6,000 employees, many organized. Amsterdam city employees normally had a higher wage rate than other concerns paid. For over two years the shoe had been on the other foot, and the commission on new wage scales was still sitting. At that moment, after the success of the rail workers, the city employees offered an ultimatum — a wage increase on the following Monday, or a strike. The public was largely unaware of the wage injustice, and the strike menace seemed to them a vast annoyance. Pressure was brought to bear on the government, which was strongly anti-Socialist, to introduce immediately restrictive labor laws, especially aimed at strikes in public services. A press campaign raised the fears of revolution in the minds of the readers. The rail leaders were ready to declare a strike against such laws. The government called up two troops of soldiers to protect the railroads and Amsterdam. The Premier of Holland proposed to a suddenly assembled House severe penalties for rail and public service strikes, and forbade picketing.

Union ranks were indignant, and gave little attention to the more prudent advice of the Social Democrats. The latter had recognized that the surprise element in the earlier rail strike that year would not be there for a national general strike; that the clergy, the politicians, and the rail companies would all be against labor. As with Syndicalists the world over, very little preparation was made for the strike. Their previous victory had made them reckless in overvaluation of their own power. On April 6 the fatal decision was taken. The president of the Committee of Defense (strike committee) declared that the strike was called primarily against the threatened anti-labor laws, and in the second place to enable the rail workers to get better wages before the new laws were passed.

The strike did not work out as labor expected. Many railroad workers refused to strike. In the Amsterdam rail shops only 900 out of 1,400 quit work. Enough trains ran to show that the strike was not total. The government, on the other hand, was prepared. Warships were in the ports, and trains carried

military escorts. The middle class suffered little. It was the workers who found the stores sold out of kerosene, candles and bread. April 9 saw the offensive bills passed by 81 to 12, and the House authorized the formation of a military brigade to run the railroads in such strikes. Twenty-five thousand workers found themselves locked out. To the great wrath of the strikers, the Committee of Defense ordered them back to work on the night of April 9. The workers in mass meeting refused to accept such an order. April 11 saw the hated bills passed unanimously by the Senate, and promulgated the same evening. Not until the twentieth did all employers withdraw the lockout. The rail workers were penalized by loss of seniority. Said V. H. Vliegen, editor of the Social Democrat Het Volk: "Against a resolute adversary, which has behind it all the forces of the bourgeoisie, the general strike can do nothing." 50

Holland

February 25-26, 1941

After the surrender of the Netherlands army, May 14, 1940, confusion and uncertainty held the Dutch mind and action. Confidence slowly returned, and ultimately the Resistance began to undermine the forces of Nazi order. The cost of living rose over 35 per cent between the capitulation and November, 1940, as the economy of the Netherlands was rapidly looted by the Nazis. 51

By October, 1941, the situation had hardened and an all-round attack upon the Dutch Jews took active form. The Dutch people were intensely annoyed at the segregation of Jews from non-Jews, and every new step against Jewish freedom added its quota of indignation against Nazis and the Dutch National Socialists. Thousands of non-Jewish workers were compelled to see and savor the rapidly growing tyranny exercised by the Nazis. By February, 1941, mutual violence by Dutch and Nazis was becoming common. The workers in shipyards and private industry factories were the only powerful groups with any weapon to use against the Nazis, viz., the general strike.

Mass arrests of Jewish business and industrial leaders forced the hands of members of the Communist Netherlands party (CNP), and in the early morning of February 25, 1941, Communists called on rail yard employees (shunters and signal men) to walk out. They obeyed, and the Communists sent a delegation to the central Amsterdam station, but failed to extend the strike there. By seven in the morning all strikers were back at work. Those who participated in the later action were

dismayed to see the trams running as if no strike were involved. Meanwhile, rumors of a general strike spread, and Communists forced the tram men to go back to the sheds. Thus by one o'clock nearly the whole of Amsterdam's workers were out. By evening German motor units with loud-speakers were warning of curfew at 7:30. On Wednesday, the twenty-sixth of February, many workers of private industry were on strike, but not many in municipal employment. By that time German terrorism was running wild, with shooting at random in the streets. Then the Wehrmacht took over.

On the other hand, there was no sign whatever of a second and more official general strike on March 6, 1941. This "spontaneous" walkout was held by Communists to be a success in that it reassured the workers. In reality, at the time of the February, 1941, strike the policies of the Dutch Communists were the same as the Comintern, and actions by Communist workers might easily confuse Dutch workers. It is therefore difficult to see what sort of "reassurance" the strike of February 25-26, 1941, could offer genuine strikers who were not either pro-Nazi or pro-German. Any action in regard to this "general strike" appears to have stemmed from CNP individual leaders. No mention is made of a strike committee as a source of orders. This type resembles the "rolling strike" of French practice, not a genuine general strike.

Switzerland: Geneva
November, 1918

In February, 1918, last year of World War I, pressure was brought to bear upon the Swiss Federal Council by the Labor Federation to demobilize the Swiss army immediately, starting early in February and completing it by May 1. The Federal Council by a vote of 132 to 75 agreed to immediate reinforcement of the Swiss border forces, as an answer to the Labor Federation. By November a London press comment referred to "troubles in Switzerland" as "causing uneasiness."⁵²

In September, 1918, material concessions granted by the Swiss Federal Council to the organized workers of Switzerland ended talk about a general strike which had been prevalent for weeks. Among concessions granted were reduction of hours of work for railwaymen, more equitable distribution of scarce food supplies, together with an increase of wages to Federal Departments' employees by \$100 a year.⁵³

A general strike began in Switzerland on November 13 and lasted three days. It was not a mere local affair. Most

French-Swiss workers refused to strike, declaring it all a Bolshevik plot, and saying that the workers had not been consulted before the leaders signed and issued a manifesto for a general strike. The N. Y. Times asserted that the Bolshevik agents in Switzerland planned a revolution, hoping that it would extend to France and Italy. These agents were arrested and the Bolshevik legation staff was put over the border. The German-Swiss press aided the agitation. The strike was said to have been led by the Germans who had become Swiss naturalized citizens. 54

Switzerland: Geneva
November, 1932

A twenty-four hour general walkout in the city of Geneva was decreed for Saturday, November 12, by 87 votes to 58 of the Committee of Geneva Syndicats (unions), thereby changing a "day of mourning to a day of strike." This action was in protest against thirteen deaths of civilians in a clash on November 9 between soldiers and the crowd. Origin of the clash was a closed meeting of right-wing (Fascist?) citizens wherein speakers called Nichole's group "evil parasites." Nichole and other left-wing Socialists were refused entrance. A resultant riot brought out young and untrained recruits who were attacked by the crowd. Recruits shot into the mob, killing ten and wounding forty. No recruits were killed. Nichole's paper, Travail, had called on its readers to provide themselves with pepper and whistles, and to take possession of the streets. A meeting of the Socialist party of Geneva the day after the riot refused to order a general strike, invited members to take part in funeral obsequies, and left the decision on the strike to individuals. Nichole meanwhile was under arrest. On trial he stated, "I have never preached revolution; I have only said that revolution was a necessity."

On the day of the walkout the trolley men refused to associate themselves with the strike. Almost all stores remained open, and some workers in the construction industry ignored the strike call. Journal de Genève, in the issue of November 14, stated that extra troops in the city would be withdrawn "if workers return to work," implying that the strike had not yet ended.

LATIN AMERICA

(For Argentina see Chapter XIV, "The Revolutionary General Strike.")

Most Latin American countries are still agricultural, with virtually a one-crop economy. In most cases the early trade unions were to be found in the transportation field (railroads, buses). Mining (e.g., tin, in Bolivia) and oil have been the two great extractive industries, and textiles the favorite factory production. What little labor organization has taken place has been in areas where large companies, dominated by foreign capital, have controlled the production of commercialized crops (e.g., United Fruit). Unions with a nationalistic slant have been the outcome of these conditions in agriculture, and "Yankee Imperialism" has been the favorite whipping boy.

Latin American unions almost without exception have been tied to some political group, inside or outside the government (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Peru). There has been little experience as yet of real political democracy of the type found in Britain, Scandinavia, Canada or the United States. Up to 1914 the ruling element in the unions was Anarcho-Syndicalism (compare Spain), with some opposition from Socialism. Since 1914 there has been more of the Marxist influence, with considerable influence by Communists. The Apristas, perhaps, are relatively peculiar to Peru. The trend of government intervention in trade union organization was seen vividly in Perón's Argentina, and even more seriously in the labor code of Mexico. Latin American labor has paid a high price for labor codes and social security, because the basic wage still remains so low that pensions and social security mean little in actual purchasing power. And the price paid has been the loss of independence in such countries as Argentina and Brazil. Such nations may yet find the closeness of relations between the government and the trade unions extremely embarrassing, especially where labor demands, like Gompers of old, "More, More," but sees no point in added productivity.⁵⁵

The following thumbnail sketches of Latin American general strikes do not pretend to be inclusive, but do attempt to give samples of the strike's use in many of the Central and South American countries. Considerable unacknowledged information and background have been gratefully absorbed from State Department records and archives, but the writer is solely

responsible for anything that is incorrectly or inadequately stated.

Brazil
1954

The largest country in the South American continent, with its culture and language derived from Portugal, Brazil has been relatively free from general strike threats until recently. During the world depression a revolutionary group under Getulio Vargas took over the government with Vargas as provisional president. In 1937 he seized absolute power. In 1945 he was deposed by the army and became a senator. Brazil took part with the Allies in the second World War. After the interval out of office, in 1950 Vargas returned to power as an elected president, representing a left-of-center labor party. Severe inflation ensued, due to over-swift industrialization, and acute trouble started in June, 1954, when the Supreme Court suspended operation of a presidential decree doubling the minimum wage all over Brazil as of July 1. The Supreme Court sought time in which to consider the constitutionality of the decree. Workers in several unions were roused to great indignation. The president had in 1951 raised the minimum wage through the same method of the decree, though not by such a large increase.

In 1954 the industrialists twice raised prices in view of the coming decree. Thus, held the labor leaders, the workers would be paying for the raises in greater living costs, and would not receive the benefit of the decree. Rumor had it that the Communists sought to call a general strike of protest for July 1, but conservative forces in labor were hostile to the idea. Then came the startling suicide of President Vargas, late in August, with a new government under Senor Café Filho not as ready to cater to the labor unions. A general strike was called for September 2, despite the fact that Brazilian law forbade strikes for political purposes. While there was a real economic basis for discontent among the semiskilled, there was no question that the Communists did their utmost to benefit from the emotional reaction of Vargas' labor followers to his death.⁵⁶

There had been friction between the army and Vargas for several months. The latter had been elected in 1950 by a combination of radical groups including Vargas' own Labor party, the Socialists (Social Democrats), and the progressive Social party, to which belonged Vice-President Café Filho. While the Communist party was outlawed in Brazil, it could swing over one hundred thousand votes, under the leadership of

Luis Carlos Prestes, and some of those went to Vargas.

Sao Paulo, a city of two million population and second only to Rio de Janeiro in size, was alleged to be the center of strike activity, with Brazilian Communist No. 1 (Prestes) as the master mind. As it turned out, the Sao Paulo general strike of September 2 was only a partial success. The Transport Workers' Union split over the strike, and some of the city transit employees refused to walk out. At least twenty unions refused to participate, including the powerful Building Workers' Union. This made it hard to create a "general strike atmosphere." The Sao Paulo Committee of the Labor party announced that it had not approved the strike call. The implication was that the Communists had been the main organizing force, building up as they did Vargas' farewell letter to his people into a general attack upon foreign capital and his Brazilian enemies.

The Rio unions withdrew from the strike in advance, inasmuch as both the government and the employers had expressed a readiness to negotiate the workers' demands. Of the million-odd workers in Sao Paulo, not over one-third actually went out on strike, but that sufficed to hamper greatly the city's normal activities, although there was no complete cessation of work. Meanwhile, the Police, the Air Force, and the Army were all standing by for prompt action, but they were not conspicuous in the streets.⁵⁷

Vargas' suicide had been the indirect result of an attempt to kill Colonel Lucerda, a bitter and outspoken opponent of the president. Rumor had connected the Vargas bodyguard with the would-be assassin, and the scandal grew as the Vargas government failed to uncover the culprit. It is likely that oil underlies a good deal of the anti-Vargas feeling. Brazil has great resources, but not enough domestic capital to develop them. Vargas had put through a bill to nationalize certain of these resources. Foreign capital, therefore, did not find itself attracted to Brazil during Vargas' dictatorship and subsequent presidency. While he was in power inflation was the outcome of his efforts to industrialize his country at possibly too swift a tempo. The doubling of the minimum wage as of July 1, 1954, was the last straw to the interest groups that were his enemies. With Vargas dead, the coalition broke up, and President Café Filho turned towards the parties of private enterprise and foreign capital. These facts the Communists played up to the limit, particularly attacking the United States.⁵⁸

British Guiana
October, 1953

The People's Progressive party of British Guiana called a general strike in that country for October 11, 1953. This action was a protest against the suspension by the British government in London of Guiana's constitution. Simultaneously the British governor, Sir Alfred Savage, stripped the members of the newly elected left-wing government, led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, of their portfolios. The governor was no longer constitutionally required to take their advice.

The British government had given the people of Guiana a new constitution in April, 1953, more liberal than any held in a Caribbean colony. Jagan and his followers in the People's party announced that it was not liberal enough; that if elected they would abolish the governor's power to veto and the State Council's right to delay application of laws passed by the Assembly. Jagan's party insisted that the sugar growers — sugar being the country's main economic product — should recognize the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union (affiliated with the Communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions) instead of the union with which they had been dealing.

The British Colonial Office made a public statement about the situation in British Guiana. Two paragraphs concern the strike called by the leaders of the People's Progressive party:

"Ministers have used their official positions in the trade unions and their influence as Ministers to provoke and encourage a stoppage of work in the sugar industry for political purposes, without regard for the real interests of the workers.

"They deliberately spread the stoppage of work to other industries, including the services essential to the life of the community, which it was their duty as Ministers to protect."

Further charges against the People's party leaders included:

The Ministers had no intention of making the Constitution work. Their sole object is to seize control of the whole life of the territory and to run it on totalitarian lines. They incited large, unruly crowds to attend the meetings of the House Assembly and intimidate the opposition members. They have campaigned to undermine the loyalty of the police force; have created a Pioneer Youth League (Communist); the elected ministers and the party were "under control of a Communist clique."

The governor answered the call for the strikes (sugar and general) by appeal to Britain for troops, inasmuch as the police force was of doubtful loyalty. It is significant that Dr. Jagan, his wife, and his minister colleagues were not arrested or given "protective detention." As far as the territory was concerned they were free to come and go. When they sought to go to Britain or the United States, however, to get their case heard by Parliament or by the United Nations, they had difficulty in finding air lines that would accept them for transit. In a radio address to the people on October 16 the governor stated that the attempted general strike had failed. Even as he spoke, the strike in the sugar industry remained. 59

Housing conditions for sugar plantation workers have been worse than "Tobacco Road." They were "indescribably foul, rickety shacks of corrugated iron, rusting to pieces." "Whatever the aims of the Progressives, the workers respond to their promises of an easier and better life." Perhaps this abortive general strike may have sped an improvement of conditions. 60

Chile
1919

Chile had a well organized Socialist party which was supported by the trade unions. In January, 1919, a general strike was called in the south of Chile, as a protest against the high cost of living (aggravated by an unfavorable foreign trade balance). Destruction of property and serious rioting resulted as the strike spread to the textile mills and the miners. The government declared a state of martial law, and similarly halted a further general strike called months later.

By September, 1919, labor seemed strong enough to its leaders to declare another general walkout, four days in length, and marked for its orderly and peaceful conduct. This strike ended with the organization of a conciliation court under direction of the President of Chile. 61

Chile
1932

It has been said that the role played by the Latin American university students is peculiar to the Latin world. They make of institutions of learning forums of political discussion, or even barracks. When they "start something" the accumulated liberal or reactionary grievances of years break forth into violent protest. The general strike was planned for weeks and scheduled for January 11 and 12, 1932.

It was organized by the Federation of Students and the Federation of Workers. Supported by Communists, some labor leaders and left-wing politicians, it was a failure. The demands of the initiators included: dissolution of the International Nitrate concern and nationalization of the industry without indemnity; amnesty for all recent naval mutineers; the dissolution of congress and the holding of new, free elections; a six-hour day as a solution of unemployment; and national agricultural colonization on the basis of Socialist cooperatives. The Communists added still other demands, such as the recognition of Soviet Russia, dissolution of the political police, and confiscation of large fortunes and church properties.

President Montero told a deputation that they did not represent labor, since 90 per cent of Chilean workers were on the job; that the strike was illegal, and any employers who replaced strikers would be acting illegally. Perhaps the fact that clinched the argument was the utilization by the government of taxis armed with machine guns to patrol the streets.⁶²

Chile
January 30, 1946

The Minister of Justice decreed the dissolution of labor unions concerned in illegal strikes in the nitrate officinas of Mapocho and Humberstone. This led the Labor and Mining Federations to summon special meetings. A labor mass meeting resulted in a bloody riot in which carabineers shot into the crowd, killed nine, and injured scores. The Chilean Federation of Labor called a general strike for January 30, 1946.

At the mass meeting speeches of protest had been made against the decree dissolving the labor unions in the officinas. Demands were made that the decree be rescinded and the armed forces be withdrawn. The government, on the contrary, decreed a sixty-day state of siege, during which period no meetings could take place. In defiance of the government order the strike took place on Wednesday, January 30, disrupting national life for twenty-four hours. In Santiago transportation was completely paralyzed. Workers quit their jobs in electric power, gas, and drinking water plants. Technicians from the armed forces kept the essential services running. Workers also left their tasks in butcher shops, bakeries and other businesses. The entire leadership of the Federation of Labor was ordered arrested, including its Secretary-General, Bernardo Ibanez. The government lifted the state of siege in exchange for the cancellation of the general strike. Then the Communists

declared another general strike for the following Monday, February 4, to be continued until the government rescinded the original dissolution decree. The Socialists contended that the Communists' act was merely a political maneuver. At the same time four members of the Socialist party were admitted into the cabinet.

In the meantime the armed forces stepped into the breach in railroads, gas, and electricity, as partial strikes occurred in those industries. In retaliation for the split in the labor ranks it was reported that the Communists ordered sabotage and a train was derailed. Shortly after the failure of this second general strike, the government restored the legal rights of the unions of Mapocho and Humberstone, considered how to adjust the cost of living to the wage level, and decided to hurry the construction of workers' housing.⁶³

Chile
June, 1951 A long awaited general strike of twenty-four hour duration, sponsored by JUNECH (National Confederation of White Collar Workers) and FECH (Students' Federation of the Universities of Chile), was originally planned for May 17, but was postponed to June 27 because JUNECH (chiefly of radical and Falange membership) was persuaded by President Gonzalez Videla to throw its weight behind the government. The Socialist leaders of the Chilean Federation of Labor (CTCH) knew that the original idea was Communist, disliked such domination of the protest movement, yet did not dare stay out of the strike because of its popularity. Hence they allowed the constituent federations to decide each for itself whether to join the walkout. As far as demands went each component group put forward its own pet gripe. As a result the positive outcome of the strike was virtually nil. In terms of observance the strike was successful in Santiago Province, less so elsewhere. The public services and utilities continued everywhere. All banks were closed, and local transport ceased in Santiago, affecting schools, offices. The University supported FECH. The day before the strike the rail workers threw in their lot with the general strikers and trains were halted throughout Chile.

The government posted armed militia and police at all strategic points, but did not provoke disturbance. The government attitude was one of relaxed tolerance with few penalties on the strikers. The anti-labor press published. The pro-labor newspaper employees ceased work until they found only hostile

papers being issued. Then they received special dispensation to return to work. Press comment on the "victory" or "defeat" depended upon the right or left position the paper held. A meeting addressed by Communists in violent language started a parade, but the marchers were gently but firmly dispersed before the parade reached the Presidential Palace. One factor that prevented a more disorderly strike was the nationwide agreement with labor by the copper industry, achieved just before the general strike started.

Chile
May, 1954

Left-wing workers proved that they could cripple the country with a general strike. This walkout, set for May 17, was called to obtain the release of Clotario Blest, president of the Central Organization of Chilean Workers, which ordered the strike. In fact Blest was free on bail and principal speaker at the public rally. The strike was staged despite the release of its leader in order to obtain the repeal of the anti-Communist law, and to achieve Free Trade on an equal basis with all countries. It was not pointed out that the Communist aim was to obtain copper for Russia. A final demand was for a "real living wage," based on the fluctuating cost of living.

Copper mines stopped work; so did coal production. Railroads ran with soldiers as crews. What buses ran had armed police sitting beside the drivers. Streetcars were conspicuous by their absence. Most of the popular speakers attacked "Yankee Imperialism" without making clear what it was. President Ibanez, interviewed, held the opinion that 95 per cent of the strike troubles of Chile were due to Marxist agitation, mostly Communist.⁶⁴

Chile
July, 1955

The rising cost of living was at the base of this general strike. The Transport Workers Union quit work, asking for a bonus of some 25,000 pesos upward, according to the existing basic wage. Martial law was proclaimed in certain provinces, and army troops ran a few trains. In Santiago only a handful of buses ran, but no streetcars. A one-day general strike was set by the Labor Confederation for July 7. A communications strike complicated the situation. The government brought in to Santiago a thousand carabineros armed with rifles, and had on hand five hundred navy men ready to take over the electric light plants if the workers in the latter should strike, which would be against the law.

This general strike tied up most business and industry in Chile. It passed without any serious disorder. The Labor Federation threatened the government with another within ten days if the economic situation were not solved. The post-office strike was settled on the night of the general strike, but the rail, bus, and streetcar dispute was still unsolved. The main demands of the Federation were for the same minimum pay for government workers as for those in private industry, and a flat bonus for all. Virtually every working-class family was in debt, due to the rising price level, the Federation claimed. Gasoline, oil, and kerosene rapidly ran short, inasmuch as most supplies came in by freight and the trains did not run. At first the government refused to negotiate with any unions during an actual strike. The strikers refused to return without a pledge of economic improvement. Finally the government yielded substantial gains to the Transport Workers, and the latter agreed to return to work before the details were arranged. A nine-day strike in transport and the effective one-day general strike, with the threat of another, had forced the hands of the authorities.⁶⁵

Chile

January, 1956

Chile was undergoing the worst inflation in her history — a rise in the cost of living in the year 1955 amounted to 85 per cent.⁶⁶ The government attempts to stop the runaway inflation bore most heavily upon the workers. Substantial increases in pay were demanded by organized workers, including the government's own employees in Customs, Treasury, and Welfare.⁶⁷

On September 3, 1955, the Chilean Chamber of Deputies voted a ninety-day emergency law to meet the threat of a general strike by some million and a half workers.⁶⁸ The government planned to cut inflation by gradually eliminating the system of tying in the wage rate with the cost of living index.⁶⁹ In the meantime between 2,000 and 5,000 union leaders, men and women, had been jailed.⁷⁰ The Labor Federation voted to call a general strike in January, 1956, in protest against the government's method of reducing inflation.⁷¹ Labor headquarters was frequently shifted in view of the mass arrests of union leaders.⁷²

When the call for the general strike was ultimately issued, police entered private homes without a warrant and seized politicians, journalists and labor leaders. One such arrest was that of Senor Prat, former Finance Minister of President Carlos Ibanez, who had occasionally been critical of government

policies in his newspaper. 73

The strike, set for January 9, 1956, failed to materialize. Chile's top labor leader, Clothario Blest, had forecast from a prison cell that the strike would be a complete success, despite the fact that its leaders were in jail. The president had declared a state of siege; the armed forces were fully mobilized. In Santiago alone thirty thousand men had been alerted. Specialists from the three branches of the military were ready to take over all public services. Army and police had orders to arrest anyone inciting to strike, and to use firearms if necessary. An armed soldier sat on each bus or trolley beside the driver. Army tanks were available near the Defense Ministry. In short, the workers faced prison or death if they dared to obey the general strike call. Unlike the one-day strike of July, 1955, this January walkout was a fiasco. 74

Colombia Again a country in which political revolution and
May, 1947 the use of the general strike appear greatly en-
 tangled. A split in the Liberal party in 1946 made
possible the winning of the presidency by Mariano Ospina Perez,
a conservative.

In 1947 labor was increasingly dissatisfied with wage-price relations in governmental policy. A national conference of the CTC (Columbian Confederation of Workers) at Bogota in April led to a declaration of a general strike for May 13. The demands were many, but included: 60 per cent increase for government employees; intercession of government with private employers for same raise; immediate stoppage of dismissals of union members by private employers; creation of conciliation and arbitration tribunals; management's strict compliance with labor laws, pacts, etc.; government action to halt eviction of farmers. The government suspended the CTC charter for three months because the CTC failed to obey the government orders to call off the general strike; but on May 26 the Council of State revoked this suspension of the charter, using the argument that the government can establish new administrative rules, but may not set up new principles or penalties not already provided in the basic law (#6 of 1945). The Catholic-sponsored Union of Colombian Workers and the Pacific Railway Workers' Union did not obey the general strike call of the CTC. 75

Colombia
April, 1948 While Bogota, capital of Colombia, was acting as host to the ninth International Conference of the American States, an unsuccessful revolt broke out, following the assassination of the Colombian liberal leader, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. A general strike, already present in Bogota, was urged on a nationwide basis by the board of directors of the Liberal party. A combined press message to U.S. (strict censorship was the rule) announced that the Colombian government had broken off relations with Soviet Russia, implying that foreign agents or local Communists had been responsible for the revolt. Colombians visiting New York expressed doubt that Communists were to blame for the uprising; asserted that the cost of living in Bogota had risen 17 per cent in the preceding month, and that a drought had reduced food supplies to a minimum. The presence of the International Conference only added to the scarcity. The workers' situation was so critical that it only needed a spark to set off the explosion. The army was in sole command of order in Bogota, some of the police having sided with the revolutionaries.⁷⁶

Cuba
1930, 1932 As a twenty-four hour protest against unemployment, the Third International ordered a general strike in Cuba for March 20, 1930. There was some expectation that Union Nacionalista would take advantage of the strike to start a campaign against President Machado.⁷⁷ Many unions were suspended by the authorities. Two years later the Havana police seized a quantity of proclamations calling on labor unions to organize a general strike in protest against the continued suspension of constitutional guarantees. Wholesale arrests had been made of the leaders of "left-wing" labor organizations. The strike was scheduled for March 24, 1932.⁷⁸

Cuba
1933-1934 The people in the Cienfuegos district demanded the immediate resignation of the president. A general strike within that area on August 7, 1933, was completely effective. Business stopped; all trains ceased to run, although the air mail still functioned. There were no disorders, the Rural Guards being in control. Further efforts at general strikes were made after Machado's resignation on October 30, 1933, and January 18, February 8, March 10, and July 11, 1934. All failed or were relatively ineffective. As in

so many other Latin American countries, the revolutionary general strike and revolution were continually entangled.

Cuba Students and professors asserted everywhere that only
1935 a general strike would remove from office President Mendieta, as it had Machado in 1933. By March 8 a general strike was on in all earnest. Shops closed and wheels stopped turning. But this time the president, encouraged by Colonel Batista, determined to crush the strike with force. All constitutional rights were set aside, leaders of dissident factions imprisoned or killed. By March 13 the revolutionary general strike had been broken, and the government was victorious. It was estimated that half a million workers went on strike, including school teachers, some 50,000 government employees, and all varieties of labor unions from right to extreme left. All unions supporting the strike were dissolved by the president. From the outset the strikers had called for the downfall of Colonel Batista, commander in chief of the army, and President Mendieta.⁷⁹

Cuba A more than usually economic general strike
October, 1950 was called for October 28, between five A.M. and noon, as a protest against the meeting of island employers to form an organization which would oppose encroachment by organized labor. The display of labor unity was fairly effective. Island transport was largely paralyzed. Dock work stopped and plane service was disrupted. Otherwise the strike was rather sporadic. Large restaurants closed; smaller ones remained open. It was a question whether worker absences were due to the strike or to the lack of transportation. President Prio made no comment on the walkout, for or against. The press held the strike illegal, unwarranted, and a failure.

Cuba and Castro On April 1, 1958, Fidel Castro, Cuban leader
1958-1959 and hero, declared total war against Batista's government; stated that the culmination of his strategy would be the calling of a general strike.⁸⁰ That strike was called by Castro on April 8, to go into effect the next day. The strike showed considerable success in surrounding towns, but in Havana was a fiasco, because the conservative labor federation (CTC) forbade it, and because Batista's armed forces shot over forty strikers. The N. Y. Times asserted that the Havana fiasco was due to bad planning, coordination and communication.⁸¹ Castro seems to have been

aware, at least in the last weeks of the civil struggle, that he himself must take an active part in the coordination of general strike plans (date of call, duration and revocation).⁸²

The first days of January, 1959, saw what proved to be the final attack on Batista's forces, with Castro calling another national strike. This time Batista weakened and fled to Santo Domingo with many of his police and army aides. Then followed a Rebel March to Havana, by stages, so that Castro might be seen and cheered by all. But long before the capital city was reached Castro had called off the general strike. The veterans appeared to be friendly to Castro's followers, and the stress of the strike was telling on the people because of food scarcity. Many a book, article, and report will be needed before Jules Dubois' question can be answered concerning Fidel Castro: "Rebel, Liberator or Dictator?"⁸³

Nevertheless, the story of the general strike as used in Cuba during the past seven to ten years, if told without reference to Fidel Castro, would indeed be Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. When, however, one reads a detailed and rather drearily repetitious book such as that of Dubois, it has to be recognized that the revolution's ups and downs were far more important to both Dubois and Castro than were the declaration, organization, and revocation of the Cuban general strikes. It may be that the series of general strikes in Haiti had considerably influenced Castro. It is doubtful, however, if the one in Cuba just before Batista's abdication was the central action of Castro and his followers.

While the strategy of the final strike against the tyrant Batista was alleged by Castro to be a general revolutionary strike, the disparate key organizations of the strike seem to have lacked cohesion — for example, such groups as the Students, the National Labor Front, and the Civic Resistance Movement (Professions, Business).⁸⁴ Furthermore, the duration of the culminating general strike seemed uncertain, as witness the indefinite strike, which, once started by the student bodies, must be kept going until the end of the dictatorship.⁸⁵

Ecuador
August, 1933

Since 1900, administrations have fallen, generally by force, on the average of every two years. As will be seen below, general strikes have been auxiliary weapons for accomplishing changes in administration, or protests against executive action. Lack of effective labor organization and the use of influence by church

authorities against the general strike have weakened the protest. Congress called upon President Mera to resign, August 22, 1933. On August 28 Congress voted a three-day adjournment in protest against the president's refusal to resign. The same day a general strike was called for the city of Quito by the "Central Committee of Popular Struggle." August 29 saw the complete cessation of local transport. (The government suspended the streetcar service to protect the cars.) Water and light, banks, and the railroad to Guayaquil continued normally, but all stores closed. There was no disorder, and on the second evening of the strike it was called off by the committee. Food was not scarce during the strike, but prices rose.

Ecuador
September, 1939

A labor law was passed hastily by Congress, without reading, as a mark of tribute to labor, with the intention of revising the act later. When Congress got busy discussing amendments which were demanded alike by local industry and by foreign companies, labor threatened a general strike. While the government believed that it could cope with such a strike, Congress suddenly and unexpectedly yielded to the threat of a general work stoppage, and announced that the act would not be considered until the next session (August, 1940).

Ecuador
April, 1946

"The National Confederation of Workers called a general strike in Ecuador today, protesting against a government decree suspending constitutional guarantees." Nine hundred employees in seven Quito plants were the first to walk out. President Jose Valasco Ibarra, in view of a plot against the government, suspended the constitutional guarantees. By night of the same day the restrictions were partially lifted by the government. 86

Peru and
Haya de la Torre

Just as Argentine labor in the past decade has meant Juan or Eva Perón, so in Peru the labor movement seems to have centered around the first important political party affected by Marxian ideas, with its alphabetical symbol APRA, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance. Originally a student organization based upon an inter-American and international philosophy, it uses the group abhorred by Marx, the petit bourgeoisie, as a pivot on which to achieve its semi-Marxian ends. It bases its program on the state as an economic unity, but does not, apparently, accept the Fascist corporative state. Its ultimate

aim is government by the workers and the lower middle classes. It desires to speed industrialization, public works, and irrigation, with economic decentralization on the basis of the economic zones such as one finds in Peru. Above all, its leader, Haya de la Torre, holds that the exploited Indian must be among the new leaders of Peru. The Aprista party is outlawed in Peru, and there is considerable confusion in its philosophy, as might be expected when its leader has swung from an interest in Communism to an enthusiasm for the Nazis. He was interned for five years in the Columbian Embassy in Peru, but in April, 1954, was "expelled as an unworthy citizen" to Mexico. 87

Peru
May, 1931

Two general strikes in Peru will be briefly recorded, the first in 1931. At that time the Metropolitan Bus Company, under control of New York capital, acquired a franchise from Empresas Electricas giving it the right of exclusive bus operation on the streets of Lima and its suburbs. Profitable and efficient service was held impossible with the competition of privately owned taxis or cars which operated along the main routes at fares below the Metro Company's legal rates. In April the government decreed limits on the competition of these colectivos. On May 5 the police arrested all taxi drivers illegally operating. The Federation of Chauffeurs called a strike of taxis and bus drivers for May 7. One union after another joined the striking taximen, and governmental edicts became more harsh. Vandalism broke out, buses being stopped and set afire. Streets were covered with nails and private cars' tires were slashed. The strikers held a meeting on the University campus and met with warm support from the students.

Police shooting followed a clash over a bus. The government forbade any gathering of more than four persons; sedition or mutiny would be met with court-martial. The University campus and the headquarters of the Federation of Chauffeurs were both closed, so the strikers had nowhere to go. Ultimately, on May 12, the government weakened, suspended its offensive decree, and created an Arbitration Board to reconsider the transportation issue. The strikers' ultimatum to the government had mingled highly political demands with their economic ones, including even amnesty for mutineers in the Santa Catalina barracks, together with the cancellation of all licenses to Chinese or Japanese to drive taxis or colectivos. The general strike dragged on to May 14, and the Arbitration Board gave a

decision hostile to the Metro Company. It was largely the degree of public sympathy for the strikers that led to the government's change of mind. It is also rather evident that many of the strikers objected to the injection of Communistic demands by the Federation of Labor, part-way through the strike. Except for the fact that most Latin American general strikes mingle the use of armed force with cessation of work, it might be rather difficult to prove that the 1931 strike was revolutionary.⁸⁸

Peru
August, 1947

The strike of August, 1947, was essentially political, being called by APRA because a minority of anti-Apristas in Congress refused to attend, and thus prevented a quorum. The walkout affected commerce and industry in Lima and Callao, its port, for four days. Factories, shops, offices were closed, and uncollected garbage littered the streets. Bus lines were operated by the military, while goon squads were used by labor to get workers out on strike. Against union orders, workers began to straggle back for small concessions. Labor claimed the strike ended in return for concessions by employers. Others held that the end was brought about by President Bustamente's radio broadcast suspending constitutional rights. The loss of prestige by APRA was largely hidden to the average citizen in the outcry which arose from the death of a student, occasioned by the government's suppression of student meetings. De la Torre was for some months a hunted man because of his part in an armed APRA revolt in Callao in October of the same year.

Peru
June, 1956

A sympathy strike with wage demands in a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey paralyzed activities in Lima. Phone and rail services ceased, but bus and streetcar drivers refused to join the general strike.⁸⁹

Uruguay
February, 1932

Communist organizations planned a coup d'état in Montevideo during the celebration of Carnival. The government, however, arrested Communist elements in the army before Carnival started. Justicia, the Communist organ, was closed, and another establishment which aided the production of further editions was also closed. This caused the Communists to call a general strike in protest for February 12. The actual walkout seemed to consist mainly of taxi drivers, printers, and gas

station staffs. The government received almost unanimous support. On the first day of the strike the buses were often driven by other than regular chauffeurs. Virtually every business remained open, but paralysis of transport reduced their trade. The news boys refused to distribute; newspaper operators agreed upon a forty-eight hour suspension. Except for the oil companies, the American industries were not affected. The linotype men felt that the Communist organ should not have been closed, but that its editor should have been penalized for objectionable statements. 90

Uruguay
April, 1951 Originally called by the UGT (Communist labor organization) for March 30, the projected strike was postponed to April 6 when the UGT found that it was not proceeding according to expectations. In a Communist demonstration against a Washington meeting of Foreign Ministers of OAS (Organization of American States) the strike platform included sundry local labor demands regarding strike pay and higher wages.

The refusal of bus line workers and those in municipal transportation to participate did much to rob the strike of its effectiveness. Most unions published the reasons for refusal to take part in the strike. Typical comment was that the strike was completely political in nature. A mass meeting after the strike was a fiasco, some three hundred attending. After this failure, a Communist politically inspired strike seemed very unlikely in Uruguay.

Venezuela
February, June, 1936 From 1908 to 1935, when he died, General Juan Vincente Gomez ruled as dictator over Venezuela. His death gave rise to two general strikes, described below.

The first, organized by University students, and brought on by a decree establishing a press censorship, led to rioting in the capital city, Caracas. Five persons were killed; cavalry patrolled the streets. A delegation of students to the palace of President Contreras demanded the removal from office of all the Gomez regime, cancellation of the press censorship, and restoration of civil rights within fifteen days. All public services were suspended throughout the day, newspapers were not printed, and all commercial houses were closed. Streetcars and buses did not run. The president responded to the mob's demands by removing the governor of the city, replacing him by an army general. 91

In June of the same year it was evident that all the Gomez regime had not been removed. When a strike was called protesting a law for suppression of extremists, the government on June 11 jailed the strike committee at Maracaibo. Workers in the oil industry had participated in the walkout there. Many arrests were made in Maracaibo and in the capital. Venezuelan labor contended that the law was dictatorial and unconstitutional. The strikers demanded the dismissal from government employment of all supporters of the late dictator and president, Gomez. Strikers elected supplementary officers for their organizations in the event that arrests or violence should occur. The law before Congress, according to strike leaders, virtually prohibited opposition to the government, and established a modified form of martial law. The dissolution of Congress was also demanded, inasmuch as it had been selected by Dictator Gomez. Radio communication with Caracas was suspended. 92

JAPAN

Japan, for close on a century a storm center of dynamic change in industrial, cultural, social and imperialistic patterns, remains a land where a general strike can be threatened by organized labor, but banned by the military. It is a land where 86 per cent of the working men and women are organized on an enterprise (or individual firm) basis, but its public service employees constitute a large proportion of the modern (Western) type of trade union found in Japan. In the new type of union some 520,000 members are from the Japan Teachers' Union, of which no less than 80 per cent of school principals are members.

After the surrender of Japan (V-J Day, 1945), MacArthur, Supreme Commander, concluded that encouragement of democracy, to which Americans and Japanese were supposedly pledged, included democracy in industrial relations. The resultant wildly rapid increase in union membership led to several reverses of government mind and behavior, and simultaneous amendment of the labor laws, generally with a narrowing or limiting effect on labor rights. The main aim for this seeming vacillation by SCAP was to put Japan in a strategic position to support Western industry and unions as soon as she found her own rehabilitation. Nineteen forty-five saw the beginning

of liberalization of Japanese industry. So swift were the changes, as soon as the union movement was given its head, that by mid-January, 1947, there was a threat of a general strike. This was a startling symbol of the dynamic processes stirring the Japanese people and Japanese labor organizations under the lure of a handful of Communists. The Communists knew well enough that a real general strike would compel the occupation forces to intervene. MacArthur declared that he could not permit so deadly a social weapon to be used against an impoverished nation.

This conflict between political leftwingers and SCAP puzzled the Japanese people, who thought that in 1945 they had received *carte blanche* in industrial relations, the right to organize, and the right to strike, only to find that all three of these "rights" were limited almost as soon as they were given. Something like a million civil service employees were detrimentally affected by these legal amendments to labor rights. By midsummer, 1959, Newsweek could report no gain by Communists in key positions in Japanese labor (Sohyo), although in the huge Japan Teachers' Union they were "ominously influential." Moreover, union officers had to be chosen from their own unions. Peculiarly enough, closed shop agreements are rare, but union shop is prevalent. This is because a large number of unions are on the enterprise basis. This means that union shop strengthens the firm, and keeps out the left-wing unions.

While the enterprise basis of Japan's unions militates against the labor-wide unity required by a general strike, a curious custom, the "Seasonal Struggle" (mass simultaneous return of the workers to the old home farm in the summer, and again in the winter) might conceivably be the key public motive of a general strike in the days ahead. If such action did take place, there is no question but that the large political unions (rail transport, communications, tax collections, water and sanitary services, and last, but not least, the huge Japan Teachers' Union) would swell the striking unions, and receive an allowance pay as if for vacation.

Japan
1947

The abortive general strike of February 1, 1947, threatened to interfere with two and a half million public workers. Among labor's demands of the Yoshida government were: the abolition of the tax on earned income; cancellation of the ban on payment of wages to strikers during strikes; cash payment on all salaries. Unions wanted more

government action against inflation, stronger black market pressures, and numerous wage guarantees. Meanwhile, radicals staged mass demonstrations against the Yoshida government in the larger cities, with a total estimate of a million marchers. The N. Y. Times claimed that any general strike is a political one, and a general strike in a conquered country is a revolt. Other comment on the 1947 strike implied that the labor movement by that date had reached immense proportions without achieving skilled leadership.⁹³

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2. T. H. Penson, ibid., pp. 602-609.

Chapter V

1. Edward T. Devine, "Winnipeg and Seattle," Survey, October 4, 1919. See also N. Y. Times, February 11, 1919: "The sixth day of the general strike, which has involved approximately 55,000 men... has passed off thus far without a single instance of disorder."

2. U. S. vs Skinner and Eddy Corp., Report of Auditor and Special Master in Chancery, pp. 185 ff. The Macy Board consisted of three men, appointed by the President, the Fleet Corporation and the Navy, and the President of the A. F. L.

3. Ibid., p. 187. The Seattle General Strike (issued by the History Committee of the General Strike Committee), pp. 9, 10.

4. U. S. vs Skinner and Eddy Corp., pp. 188 ff.

5. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 12-14. One hundred ten out of 130 unions voted in favor of joining the strike. N. Y. Times, February 11, 1919.

6. Kenneth Macgowan, "The Minute Men Clan," New York Tribune, March 13, 1919. By permission.

7. Boston Herald, February 17, 1919. N. Y. Times, February 9, 1919.

8. Special Washington correspondence by Lawrence Todd to the Seattle Union Record, dated March 14, 1919.

9. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 15-17.

10. William MacDonald, "The Seattle Strike and Afterwards" (written in Seattle, February 28, 1919), The Nation, March 29, 1919.

11. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 18-22.

12. Ibid., pp. 20-21, 49-52.

13. Ibid., p. 22. Also notes of an interview by W. Edwards Beach with E. B. Ault, who held that a 48-hour strike would have served its real purpose of a protest against the action of Emergency Fleet Corporation and the Macy Board, but would not have endangered labor.

14. Ibid., pp. 23-24. By February 8, word from Seattle to

the N. Y. Times stated that Leon Green (alias Rikowski), "formentor of the strike," had disappeared from the city. He had been in America for nine months. N. Y. Times, February 9, 1919.

15. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 24-27. Also interview by W. Edwards Beach with William Short, formerly President of the State Federation of Labor. Cf. New York Evening Post, February 6, 1919.

16. N. Y. Times, February 7, 1919.

17. New York Evening Post, February 6, 7, 1919.

18. Ibid., February 8, 1919.

19. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 31-37.

20. N. Y. Times, February 10, 1919. By permission.

21. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 37-38. Cf. New York Evening Post, February 8, 1919.

22. New York Evening Post, February 10, 1919.

23. The Seattle General Strike, p. 39.

24. New York Evening Post, February 10, 1919. N. Y. Times, February 10, 1919.

25. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 57-58.

26. For example, the Skinner and Eddy Corporation, cf. U. S. vs Skinner and Eddy Corp., p. 190.

27. Ibid., pp. 191-199.

28. Seattle Union Record, March 17, 1919.

29. N. Y. Times, February 11, 1919. By permission.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., February 13, 1919.

32. Anna Louise Strong, I Change Worlds, New York, Henry Holt, 1935, p. 74. By permission.

33. Ibid., p. 82. By permission.

34. Murray Morgan, Skid Road, an Informal Portrait of Seattle, New York, Viking Press, 1951, p. 202. By permission.

35. R. D. McKenzie, "Community Forces, a Study of the Non-Partisan Municipal Elections in Seattle," Jour. Social Forces, January, March, May, 1924.

36. The Seattle General Strike, pp. 41-45.

37. An excellent recent book on the strike is D. C. Masters' The Winnipeg General Strike, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1950. E. B. Fussell, "Winnipeg Labor Men 'We'll Sticklers,'" Nonpartisan Leader, June 9, 1919.

38. Edward T. Devine, "Winnipeg and Seattle," Survey, October 4, 1919. Cf. D. C. Masters, op. cit.

39. Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, a detailed report published by the Strike Defense Committee, pp. 33-41.

40. Ibid., pp. 47-49. Masters gives the vote for general strike as 11,000 for and 500 against, op. cit., p. 42.

41. London Times, May 21, 1919. Cf. also Activities and Organization of the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand, p. 5. Also Bill of Indictment against the eight strike leaders printed in the Winnipeg Telegram, November 19, 1919.

42. London Times, May 22, 1919. Cf. Activities... of Citizens' Committee, p. 6.

43. Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, p. 52. London Times, May 21, 1919.

44. D. C. Masters, op. cit., p. 11.

45. C. L. Johnson, "Revolution or Strike in Winnipeg?" The Public, June 21, 1919. Cf. Bill of Indictment published in the Winnipeg Telegram, November 19, 1919, and Report of Labor Situation in Canada (Confidential, U.S. State Department, 1919), pp. 25-26.

46. Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, pp. 21-30. Cf. also speech of A. J. Andrews, K.C., at trial of R. B. Russell, in the Manitoba Free Press, November 29, 1919. Cf. D. C. Masters, op. cit., pp. 37, 39.

47. Activities... of Citizens' Committee, p. 7.

48. Ibid., p. 6, 23-24.

49. London Times, May 23, 1919. Cf. Edward T. Devine, op. cit.

50. Activities... of Citizens' Committee, p. 4. Cf. London Times, May 22, June 9, 1919.

51. C. L. Johnson, op. cit., Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, p. 53. London Times, June 16, 1919.

52. London Times, May 24, 26, 1919.

53. Ibid., May 26, June 4, 1919. Cf. Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, pp. 68-69.

54. London Times, May 26, 27, 29, June 2, 4, 1919.

55. Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, pp. 84-91.

56. London Times, June 6, 1919. Cf. Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, pp. 98-99. Also N. Y. Times, June 3, 1919; Boston Herald, May 31, 1919.

57. London Times, June 2, 1919.

58. Boston Herald, May 31, 1919. Cf. London Times, June 3, 4, 1919.

59. London Times, June 6, 7, 9, 1919. N. Y. Times,

June 17, 1919, claimed that 42 out of 65 Vancouver unions were still on strike by June 16.

60. London Times, June 11, 1919.

61. Edward T. Devine, op. cit. Cf. London Times, May 27, June 2, 9, 1919. Cf. D.C. Masters, op. cit., p. 103.

62. London Times, June 12, 1919. N.Y. Times, June 11, 1919, "Winnipeg food vendors are virtually eliminating all credit during the strike."

63. Boston Herald, June 11. London Times, June 14, 1919. Cf. Activities... of Citizens' Committee, p. 16.

64. London Times, June 14, 1919.

65. Ibid., June 16, 1919.

66. Ibid., June 18, 19, 1919. Among the leaders arrested were R. B. Russell, Secretary to the Metal Trades Council, the Rev. William Ivens, of the Labor Church, R. E. Bray, leader of the returned soldier strike parades, George Armstrong, and Aldermen Quinn and Heaps — a very Anglo-Saxon list of names. See N.Y. Times, June 15, 1919, which states: "The order for the warrants was issued under the authority of the Federal Government."

67. London Times, June 20, 21, 1919.

68. From Bill of Indictment against Woodsworth, quoting his article, "Bloody Saturday" as a "seditious libel." The case against Woodsworth was dropped by the Government some months later. For the story of Woodsworth's background see K. W. McNaught, "J. S. Woodsworth and a Political Party for Labor 1896 to 1921," Canadian Historical Review, June, 1949.

69. London Times, June 23, 1919. N.Y. Times, June 22, 1919.

70. News Letter of the Defense Committee, dated Winnipeg, February 21, 1920.

71. There was great confusion as to the meaning of "collective bargaining." The strikers meant negotiation by the Metal Trades Council; the employers meant local by local. See D.C. Masters, op. cit., p. 101.

72. London Times, June 26, 27, 1919.

73. A. Vernon Thomas, "Quoting Isaiah in Winnipeg," The Nation, January 3, 1920.

74. Ibid.

75. The Winnipeg Telegram, November 19, 1919, printing indictment in full. Cf. D.C. Masters, op. cit., p. 114.

76. Metcalfe in The King vs R. B. Russell, Winnipeg, December, 1919.

77. New York World, January 11, 1920. Cf. New York Call, December 28, 1919.
78. J. A. Stevenson, "A Set-back for Reaction in Canada," The Nation, March 6, 1920. Cf. D.C. Masters, op. cit., p. 125.
79. Manchester Guardian, September 3, 1920.
80. Bill of Indictment against J. S. Woodsworth, count (4).
81. N. Y. Times, March 28, 1920.
82. D.C. Masters, op. cit., p. 128. By permission.
83. Cf. K. W. McNaught, "J. S. Woodsworth and a Political Party . . .," Canadian Historical Review, June, 1949, p. 132.
84. D.C. Masters, op. cit., p. 132. By permission.
85. Ibid., p. 134. By permission.

Chapter VI

1. A detailed, fully documented account of British labor relations from 1919 to 1927 can be found in W. H. Crook, The General Strike, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1931.
2. "La préparation Bolcheviste de la grève Anglaise," La Revue de Paris, May 15, 1926, p. 672. (Written from a vigorous anti-Communist viewpoint.)
3. George Glasgow, General Strikes and Road Transport, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1926, Chap. III.
4. One of Cook's famous sentences was "There can be no cooperation with capitalism so far as I am concerned" (London Times, March 29, 1926). Walter Citrine, level-headed Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, describes the Minority Movement and its close connection with the Communist party, in articles entitled "Democracy or Disruption," Labour Magazine, December, 1927, January, February, March, 1928.
5. R. Page Arnot, The General Strike May 1926: Its Origin and History, London, Labor Research Department, 1926. (A left-wing or Communist treatise. Italics added.)
6. London Times, April 30, 1926.
7. Report of Special Conference of Executive Committees, April 29-May 1, 1926, p. 34.
8. The offending Daily Mail editorial included the following sentence: "The General Strike is not an industrial dispute; it is a revolutionary movement, intended to inflict suffering upon a great mass of innocent persons in the community, and thereby

put forcible restraint upon the government. . . ."

Chapter VII

1. A detailed, fully documented account of British labor relations from 1919 to 1927 can be found in W. H. Crook, The General Strike, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1931.
2. Winston Churchill in the House of Commons, May 3, 1926.
3. During the strike the Navy provided personnel for running power stations, operated docks and cold storage plants, maintained mail service to Ireland, protected and distributed gasoline supplies, and carried the 250 tons of yeast daily that was essential in the making of Britain's bread. See Archibald Hurd, "The Navy on Active Service," Fortnightly, July, 1926.
4. T. U. C. General Council, Report to the Conference of Executives of Affiliated Unions, June 25, 1926, pp. 25-26.
5. New York World, May 14, 1926.
6. Railway Review, May 14, 1926.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., May 21, 1926. (Syntax as in the original.)
9. C. F. G. Masterman, "The Trades Union War in England," Atlantic Monthly, October, 1927. Cf. Hansard (Lords), July 4, 1927.
10. Emile Burns, The General Strike May 1926: Trades Councils in Action, Labor Research Department, London, 1926.
11. Ibid., p. 20.
12. Ibid., p. 33.
13. Ibid., pp. 36, 39.
14. The Scotsman, September 7, 1927. Cf. the Daily Herald, September 7, 1927, and W. H. Crook, "British Labor Speaks for Itself," Survey, November 15, 1927.

Chapter VIII

1. In order of reference, see: North Central Improvement Association, San Francisco Examiner, July 17, 1934; Frank J. Taylor, "Behind the San Francisco Strike," ibid., March, 1935; New York Post, July 17, 1934; Sam Darcy, The Communist, October, 1934, p. 985.

2. See Current Biography, "Alfred Bryant Renton Bridges."
3. Paul Eliel, The Waterfront and General Strikes, San Francisco, 1934, Eliel copyright, 1934. A careful and detailed collection of demands, concessions and events in the strike, with an appendix of documents.
4. Eliel, op. cit., pp. 11-12. By permission.
5. Ibid., pp. 18-20. Paul Taylor and Norman Gold, "San Francisco and the General Strike," Survey Graphic, September, 1934, p. 406.
6. Eliel, op. cit., Exhibit HH in Appendix and p. 75.
7. Oakland Tribune, May 29, 1934.
8. Eliel, op. cit., pp. 43, 49. The Industrial Association had been established in 1921 and held an open-shop philosophy.
9. Thomas Plant, President of the Waterfront Employers' Union, before the President's National Longshoremen's Board, quoted in San Francisco Examiner, July 12, 1934.
10. Eliel, op. cit., p. 64. By permission.
11. Ibid., p. 92, from the Records of the Association.
12. Ibid., p. 94. By permission.
13. Ibid., Exhibit PP. San Francisco News, June 25, 1934. San Francisco Chronicle, June 27, 28.
14. N. Y. Times, July 4, 1934. By permission.
15. Eliel, op. cit. By permission.
16. San Francisco Examiner, July 5, 1934. By permission.
17. The second victim was a Communist in good standing, named Bordoise by Willis O'Brien in the Examiner for July 10. The same paper on July 7 listed him as Counderakis, a marine cook and Communist organizer for the Country. Somebody slipped here!
18. Taylor and Gold, op. cit., p. 409. See Eliel, op. cit., p. 128.
19. Eliel, op. cit., p. 117, citing San Francisco Chronicle, July 6, 1934. By permission.
20. Darcy, op. cit., p. 991. By permission.
21. San Francisco Examiner, July 13, 1934. By permission.
22. Eliel, op. cit., p. 130. By permission.
23. N. Y. Times, July 13, 1934.
24. San Francisco Examiner, July 13, 1934. By permission.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., July 14, 1934. N. Y. Times, July 14, 1934.
27. Darcy, op. cit., p. 993. By permission.
28. N. Y. Times, July 15, 1934. San Francisco Examiner, July 15, 1934.

29. N. Y. Times, July 16, 1934. Editor and Publisher, July 28, 1934, p. 39. For Communist view of the agreement see Darcy, op. cit., p. 995.

Chapter IX

1. For the full resolution see N. Y. Times, July 13, 1934, p. 1.
2. N. Y. Times, July 26, 31, 1934. San Francisco Examiner, July 26, 31, 1934.
3. Harold D. Koontz, Government Control of Business, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1941, p. 693. By permission.
4. N. I. R. A., Section 7a, a, 1.
5. N. Y. Times, July 21, 1934. By permission.
6. Ibid. By permission.
7. Ibid., July 23, 1934.
8. Russell Porter, N. Y. Times, July 20, 1934.
9. San Francisco Examiner, May 23, 1934.
10. N. Y. Times, July 19, 1934.
11. George P. West, N. Y. Times, July 1, 1934, Sec. 4, p. 1.
12. Earl Burke, "Dailies Helped Break the General Strike," Editor and Publisher, July 28, 1934. By permission.
13. Ibid. By permission.
14. San Francisco Examiner, July 22, 1934. Also Eliel, op. cit., p. 172.
15. Burke, op. cit. By permission.
16. New York Post, July 16, 1934.
17. San Francisco Examiner, July 17, 1934.
18. Ibid., July 18, 1934.
19. N. Y. Times, July 18, 1934.
20. San Francisco Examiner, July 14, 1934.
21. Ibid., July 18, 1934.
22. N. Y. Times, July 18, 1934. By permission.
23. Ibid. By permission.
24. George P. West, "Coast City Turns Its Wrath Upon the Reds," N. Y. Times, July 29, 1934. By permission. See also N. Y. Times, July 21, 1934.
25. Miriam Allen de Ford, "Riot Guns in San Francisco," Nation, July 18, 1934, p. 65.
26. West, op. cit., July 1, 1934. By permission.
27. N. Y. Times, July 7, 1934.

28. Willis O'Brien, "10,000 at Funeral of Riot Victims," San Francisco Examiner, July 10, 1934. By permission.

29. William Hines, New York Post, July 19, 1934. By permission. Hines was at one time publisher of the San Francisco Bulletin.

30. Russell Porter, N.Y. Times, July 19, 1934. Also San Francisco Examiner, July 18, 1934.

31. San Francisco Examiner, July 18, 1934.

32. Larry O'Conner, Today, September 8, 1934.

33. N.Y. Times, July 17, 1934. By permission.

34. Ibid., July 16, 1934.

35. San Francisco Examiner, July 15, 1934.

36. New York Post, July 16, 1934. San Francisco Examiner, July 13, 1934.

37. San Francisco Examiner, July 15, 1934. N.Y. Times, July 15, 16, 1934.

38. San Francisco Examiner, July 16, 17, 1934.

39. N.Y. Times, July 17, 18, 1934. By permission.

40. Ibid., July 16, 1934. By permission.

41. Ibid. By permission.

42. Ibid., July 19, 1934. By permission.

43. San Francisco Examiner, July 13, 1934.

44. Sam Darcy, "The San Francisco Bay Area General Strike," The Communist, October, 1934, p. 989. By permission.

45. Ibid., p. 985.

46. Ibid., p. 987.

47. Labor Clarion, June 29, 1934.

48. Darcy, op. cit., pp. 990-991.

49. Ibid., p. 991. Supra, Chap. VIII, p. 119.

50. Ibid.

51. San Francisco Examiner, July 14, 1934.

52. Darcy, op. cit., p. 993. By permission. Supra, Chap. VIII, p. 121.

53. San Francisco Examiner, July 18, 1934.

54. Darcy, op. cit., pp. 998-999. A typical Communist editorial in the N.Y. Daily Worker, July 21, 1934, alleged: "Combining acts of fraud and trickery with acts of vandalism and thuggery, the ruling class of California and their lick-spittles of the Vandeleur stripe in the labor unions have succeeded in strangling the general strike - one of the most shameful betrayals of the American working man in recent history."

55. Labor Clarion, July 20, 1934, Resolution calling off strike: Be it Resolved: that this General Strike Committee assembled on July 19, 1934, now proposes that upon acceptance by the ship-owners, employers of the striking maritime workers, of the terms of the President's Longshoremen's Board for the settlement of this strike that this General Strike Committee will accept such a basis for the immediate termination of the strike. And be it further Resolved: That this General Strike Committee hereby advises all those unions that are now out on strike out of sympathy with the maritime workers and the longshoremen to immediately resume work, and that we pledge every resource, moral and financial for the continued prosecution and the successful termination of the maritime workers' and the longshoremen's strike. [Resolution passed by 191 to 174.]

56. N. Y. Times, July 20, 1934. By permission.

57. Ibid., July 21, 1934.

58. Ibid., July 26, 27, 31, 1934.

59. N. Y. Times, July 23, 26, 1934. The longshoremen's figures:

	For arbitration	Against
All ports	6,388	1,461
San Francisco	2,014	722
Portland	795	33
Seattle	762	103
Tacoma	464	87
San Pedro	1,211	149

See also San Francisco Examiner, July 26, 1934.

60. William Hines, New York Post, July 19, 1934. Reprinted by permission of New York Post, Copyright 1934. New York Post, Inc.

61. Eliel, op. cit., p. 92. By permission.

62. Ibid., p. 71.

63. Hines, op. cit., July 17, 1934. Permission as above.

64. N. Y. Times, July 20, 1934. By permission.

65. Frank J. Taylor, "Behind the San Francisco Strike," Nation's Business, Marcy, 1935.

66. N. Y. Times, July 21, 1934. President Forbes' statement. By permission.

67. Ibid., July 22, 1934. By permission. William F. Dunne, voicing the Communist party view, declared that the general strike was agreed to by the conservative labor leaders

as a "strike to end strikes," and he accuses them of sabotaging the strike by the vast number of exemption permits granted. He even alleges a monetary racket in this permit issue. Cf. The Great San Francisco General Strike, Workers' Library, 1934, pp. 22, 24, 52.

68. Labor Clarion, July 13, 1934.
69. Ibid., July 6, 1934.
70. N.Y. Times, July 21, 1934. By permission.
71. Ibid., July 20, 1934. By permission.
72. George P. West, N.Y. Times, July 29, 1934 (by permission):

Terms of Longshoremen's Return

- 1) Discharge of all men performing longshore work who were employed after the strike was called, and not regularly employed as longshoremen at the respective ports before the calling of the strike.
- 2) No discrimination of any kind.
- 3) Adjustment of wage in arbitration award retroactive to July 31, date of longshoremen's return.
- 4) Hiring hall as before, pending arbitration, but I. L. A. to have the privilege of appointing observers in the hiring halls.
- 5) Questions of unfairness or discrimination to be submitted to the National Longshoremen's Board, both parties to be bound by the decision.

See also Labor Clarion, August 3, 1934.

73. Eliel, op. cit., Exhibit HH. "The Waterfront Employers recognize the I. L. A. as the representative of the longshoremen for the purpose of collective bargaining." By permission.
74. Ibid., p. 219. By permission.
75. Ibid., Exhibit KKK, Sections 4 and 6. See Addendum (page 473) for Arbitration award.
76. New York Post, Editorial, "The Show Down," July 17, 1934. Permission as above, Note 60.

Chapter X

1. Fortune, May, 1939, p. 75, "Terre Haute Picks Itself up from a General Strike." Courtesy of Fortune Magazine.
2. Ibid., p. 132.
3. Business Week, July 27, 1935, p. 8. "Starring Terre Haute."
4. Nation, Vol. 141. When the company's employees obtained an A. F. L. charter for a local union the company proceeded to organize its own union and to fire A. F. L. employees.
5. Newsweek, August 3, 1935.
6. Fortune, May, 1939, p. 135. Business Week, July 27, 1935, p. 8.
7. Newsweek, August 3, 1935.
8. N.Y. Times, July 23, 1935.
9. Fortune, May, 1939, p. 135. Courtesy of Fortune Magazine.
10. Business Week, July 27, 1935, p. 8. By permission.
11. See above, Chapter II.
12. Newsweek, August 3, 1935.
13. Louis Stark, N.Y. Times, July 24, 1935.
14. Ibid. By permission.
15. Ibid., July 25, 1935.
16. Ibid.
17. Newsweek, August 3, 1935.
18. Fortune, op. cit., p. 135. Courtesy of Fortune Magazine.
19. Ibid. Courtesy of Fortune Magazine.
20. N.Y. Times, July 28, 1935. By permission.
21. Fortune, May, 1939, pp. 235 ff.
22. Chief of Police Harry Donahue, of Pekin, Illinois. N.Y. Times, February 6, 1936. By permission.
23. New Republic, February 19, 1936, p. 43. "First Day of a General Strike." By permission.
24. Time, February 17, 1936, p. 14. By permission.
25. New Republic, February 19, 1936, p. 43. By permission.
26. Ibid.
27. N.Y. Times, February 7, 1936.
28. New Republic, February 19, 1936, p. 44.
29. Ibid.
30. N.Y. Times, February 5, 1936. By permission.

31. Ibid., February 6, 1936.
32. Ibid. By permission.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid. By permission.
35. Ibid., February 7, 1936. By permission.
36. "Fourth General Strike is Abrupt," Literary Digest, February 15, 1936, p. 7. New Republic, February 19, 1936, p. 31.
37. N.Y. Times, February 7, 1936.
38. The Christian Century, February 19, 1936, p. 285. Copyright 1936 Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission from the Christian Century.
39. N.Y. Times, April 3, 1937. By permission.
40. Ibid.
41. Wilmington Journal (evening), March 15, 1937. Edward Krumboch, Sec.-Treas. of Local 107, said the union asked \$48.50 a week for long-distance drivers, \$34 for city drivers, \$28 for platform men, \$27 for helpers; an 8-hour day and a 6-day week. Wilmington Journal, March 16, 1937.
42. Ibid., March 16, 1937.
43. Ibid., March 17, 1937.
44. Ibid., March 18, 1937.
45. Ibid., March 20, 1937.
46. Ibid., March 22, 1937. Yet on March 23 the same Journal could state "small stores were calling for their own supplies and were permitted to go through the picket lines without interference by the strikers." By permission.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., March 23, 1937.
49. Ibid., March 26, 1937.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., March 27, 1937. By permission.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., March 29, 1937.
55. Ibid., March 30, 1937.
56. Ibid., April 1, 1937.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., Editorial. By permission.
60. Ibid., April 2, 1937.
61. Ibid. N.Y. Times, April 3, 1937.

62. N. Y. Times, April 3, 1937. By permission.
63. Ibid., April 4, 1937. Wilmington Journal, April 3, 1937.
64. Wilmington Journal, April 3, 1937. N. Y. Times, April 4, 1937.
65. Wilmington Journal, April 3, 1937.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid. Also N. Y. Times, April 4, 1937.
68. N. Y. Times, April 6, 1937.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid. By permission.
71. Wilmington Journal, April 22, 1937.
72. Ibid., April 27, 1937. By permission.
73. The Labor Herald, August 21, 1937 (endorsed by C. L. U. and Delaware State Federation of Labor).
74. Lansing Industrial News, June 4, 1937.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., June 11, 1937.
78. N. Y. Times, June 8, 1937. By permission.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., June 13, 1937, Section 4. By permission.
81. Lansing Industrial News, June 18, 1937.
82. Chard Powers Smith, "Stamford Takes a Long Lunch Hour," Harpers Magazine, March, 1946, p. 225. "Generally unnoticed in the press was the fact that it was America's first small town general strike." Mr. Smith's article is an excellent and balanced study of civic reaction to the strike. By permission.
83. Ibid., p. 227. N. Y. Times, January 3, 1946. Power, light, telephone and milk deliveries were continued by request of the Joint Strike Committee.
84. N. Y. Times, January 3, 1946.
85. J. Mitchell Morse, "Stamford Sticks Together," Nation, January 12, 1946, p. 37.
86. C. P. Smith, op. cit., p. 233. By permission.
87. Ibid., p. 228. By permission.
88. Ibid., p. 229. By permission.
89. Ibid. By permission.
90. N. Y. Times, January 4, 1946.
91. Business Week, January 12, 1946, p. 100.
92. N. Y. Times, January 4, 1946.
93. N. Y. Times, October 6, 1947, which reported the

death of the president of Yale and Towne, and referred to the 150-day strike at Stamford.

94. C. P. Smith, op. cit., p. 230. By permission.
95. Ibid., p. 226. By permission.
96. Ibid. By permission.
97. N. Y. Times, January 4, 1946. By permission.

Chapter XI

1. Philadelphia Record, February 19, 1946.
2. Ibid.
3. N. Y. Times, February 18, 1946. By permission.
4. Ibid.
5. Philadelphia Record, February 19, 1946.
6. Ibid.
7. N. Y. Times, February 19, 1946; Washington Star, February 18, 1946.
8. N. Y. Times, February 20, 1946.
9. Harrisburg Patriot, February 20, 1946.
10. Philadelphia Record, February 19, 1946.
11. Harrisburg Patriot, Editorial, "Another Tale of Two Cities," February 18, 1946.
12. N. Y. Times, February 21, 1946.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., February 19, 1946.
15. "Rochester: Death for a Day," Newsweek, June 10, 1946, p. 33. By permission.
16. "Open Shop Bastion Wavers," Business Week, May 16, 1953, p. 161.
17. Ibid.
18. Labor and Labor Herald, June 20, 1946. (Not the official A. F. L. labor organ in Rochester).
19. Rochester Labor News (Official Central Trades and Labor Council, A. F. L. weekly paper), April 26, 1946, p. 1.
20. Labor and Labor Herald, May 9, 1946, pp. 1, 7.
21. Rochester Labor News, May 10, 1946.
22. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 15, 1946.
23. Ibid., p. 16.
24. Ibid., May 16, 1946, p. 1.
25. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 16, 1946, p. 8.
26. Ibid., May 17, 1946, p. 1.

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 17.
30. Ibid., pp. 3, 7.
31. Ibid., p. 14.
32. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 18, 1946, p. 1.
33. Ibid., p. 8.
34. Rochester Labor News, May 17, 1946. By permission.
35. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 19, 1946,
p. 1. By permission.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., May 20, 1946, p. 1.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 10.
40. Justin Wroe Nixon, "Rochester - Foretaste of Fascism,"
Christian Century, Vol. 63, 1946, pp. 776 ff. Dr. Nixon was
Professor of Christian Theology in the Colgate-Rochester
Theological Seminary.
41. Rochester Labor News, May 24, 1946, p. 1. By per-
mission.
42. Ibid., p. 2. By permission.
43. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 27, 1946, p. 1.
44. Ibid., May 23, 1946, p. 19.
45. Ibid., p. 1.
46. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 23, 1946,
p. 14. By permission.
47. Ibid., May 28, 1946, p. 12. By permission.
48. N. Y. Times, May 28, 29, 1946.
49. Ibid., May 29, 1946. By permission.
50. Ibid., May 29, 30, 1946.
51. Rochester Labor News, May 31, 1946, pp. 1, 4.
52. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 30, 1946,
p. 1. By permission.
53. Ibid.
54. Monthly Labor Review, July, 1946, p. 87.
55. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 30, 1946, p. 21.
56. Ibid. Signatories: Dr. Justin Wroe Nixon, Rabbi Leon
Stitskin, the Rev. Patrick J. Flynn, the Rev. George E. Ulp,
and Father Randall. By permission.
57. Ibid. By permission.
58. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 30, 1946,
p. 1. By permission.

59. Rochester Labor News, "The President's Corner," May 31, 1946, p. 2. By permission.
60. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, May 30, 1946, p. 17. By permission.
61. Rochester Labor News, May 31, 1946; Democrat and Chronicle, May 30, 1946, p. 17.
62. Business Week, May 16, 1953, pp. 161 ff.
63. Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, MacFarlin's radio speech, May 28, 1946, p. 2.
64. Warren Moscow, N. Y. Times, May 30, 1946. By permission.
65. N. Y. Times, May 30, 1946.
66. Article 20, Section 715. "This section excludes state employees because they are responsible to the people of the state and are given in other provisions of the law adequate safeguards...." White vs Boland, 254, App. Div. 356, 5NYS 2nd 119.
67. N. Y. Times, May 30, 1946.
68. Rochester Labor News, June 7, 1946, p. 1.
69. This was adopted November 25, 1941. Rochester Labor News, July 5, 1946, p. 2. By permission.
70. Ibid. By permission.
71. Rochester Labor News, July 12, 1946, p. 1. By permission.
72. Justin Wroe Nixon, op. cit.
73. East Bay Labor Journal (Organ of Central Labor Council of Alameda County), November 1, 1946.
74. Ibid., November 8, 1946.
75. Ibid., November 22, 1946.
76. Ibid., November 29, 1946.
77. N. Y. Times, December 3, 1946; Newsweek, December 16, 1946, p. 35.
78. East Bay Labor Journal, December 6, 1946.
79. Newsweek, December 16, 1946, p. 35. By permission.
80. N. Y. Times, December 3, 1946, p. 3.
81. Ibid., December 4, 1946, p. 3.
82. Ibid., December 5, 1946.
83. Ibid. He was due to receive the appointment the next Monday.
84. East Bay Labor Journal.
85. N. Y. Times, December 5, 1946. By permission.
86. Washington Post, December 13, 1946. By permission.

87. N. Y. Times, December 6, 1946.
88. Ibid. By permission.
89. Ibid. By permission.
90. Ibid., December 7, 1946.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. East Bay Labor Journal, December 6, 1946.
95. U.S. News, December 13, 1946, p. 40.
96. East Bay Labor Journal, referring to article in International Teamsters Magazine, "Tobin Calls off Oakland Strike," January 17, 1947.
97. Ibid., February 7, 14, 21, 1947.
98. East Bay Labor Journal, May 16, 1947.
99. N. Y. Times, Reuter's wire from Reykjavik, December 16, 1952. By permission.
100. Einar Benediktsson, Correspondence. By permission. The writer is indebted to Einar Benediktsson, a citizen of Iceland and one-time graduate student in Economics, for interviews and correspondence involved in this chapter.
101. Professor Gylfi Gislason, University of Iceland, Correspondence. By permission.
102. Einar Benediktsson; cf. Morgunbladid (conservative party daily). Interview with well-known conservative, Fridleifur Fridriksson, December 12, 1952.
103. Morgunbladid, December 12, 1952.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid. Some sources put the original demand at 30 per cent, but the N. Y. Times for December 16, 1952, gives 15 per cent, as does Morgunbladid. The explanation lies in the fact that the increase on the base rate demanded was 15 per cent. The additional "fringe" demands were alleged to be merely another 15 per cent. Correspondence of September 21, 1953, with Professor Gylfi Gislason, University of Iceland. By permission.
107. Morgunbladid, December 12, 1952.
108. W. C. Chamberlin, Economic Development of Iceland through World War II, Columbia University Press, 1947.
109. Ibid., pp. 103 ff.
110. After a general election in June, 1953, the "right" and "center" parties together held 37 seats, the Communists and

Social Democrats 13. Einar Benediktsson, correspondence. By permission.

111. Law No. 53, 1915.

112. Law No. 80 of June 11, 1938.

113. Literally the term Felagsdomur means Associations Court; in this case the associations were those of the unions or the employers. This court had to take under consideration (a) alleged violation of Icelandic statute law, (b) alleged violation of labor contracts, and (c) cases admitted to the Court by agreement of both parties, provided the Court held that such cases were within its jurisdiction. For these and other references to the labor law of Iceland the writer is indebted to Einar Benediktsson for his translation and summary of portions of The Icelandic National Economy (I Jodarbúskapur Íslendinga) by Olafur Bjornson. By permission.

114. Work Stoppages are legal if:

(1) A secret ballot of the membership of a union or an employers' association has been taken (with certain required publicity and time lapse) and the ballot shows approval of a work stoppage.

(2) The constitutions of the union or the employers' association give power to its executive committee or board to call a strike or lockout, provided 75 per cent of the vote is in favor of such a grant of power.

(3) The work stoppage had been legally decided upon, the purpose being to force a change in wages or working conditions, and the stoppage has been announced to the other party or the Sattasemjari, then a work stoppage is legal seven days after the announcement.

(4) A work stoppage had been legally decided upon for purposes other than those named in (3); then no announcement is required.

The Sattasemjari was a reconciler or conciliator rather than what Americans would call an Arbitrator. He might fail to reconcile, and after that failure the parties might have recourse to a legal work stoppage. Einar Benediktsson. By permission.

115. Einar Benediktsson, correspondence. By permission.

116. Morgunbladid, December 12, 1952.

117. Ibid., November 30, 1952.

118. Professor Gislason, correspondence. By permission.

119. N. Y. Times, December 16, 1952; Morgunbladid, December 12, 1952.

120. Professor Gislason, correspondence. By permission.
121. Benediktsson, correspondence from Reykjavik. By permission.
122. Ibid. By permission.
123. Notes made on interview with Johann Hannesson, Curator of the Fiske Icelandic Collection, Cornell University, July 16, 1953. By permission.
124. Benediktsson. The Communists had urged all union members not to vote for any conservative candidate.
125. Benediktsson, correspondence. By permission.
126. Morgunbladid, December 5, 1952.
127. Benediktsson.
128. Morgunbladid, December 9, 1952.
129. Ibid. Two days later the two unions gave a two-thirds majority against joining the strike. See Morgunbladid, December 11, 1952.
130. Ibid., December 12, 1952.
131. Ibid., December 14, 1952.
132. Ibid. and December 16, 1952.
133. Benediktsson. By permission.
134. Ibid. By permission.
135. Morgunbladid, December 17, 1952.
136. Ibid., December 21, 1952.
137. See Felix Blair Jr.'s fine series of reports in the N. Y. Times, March-June, 1959. Also Manchester Guardian Weekly, September 3, 1959.

Chapter XII

1. For the early Belgian strikes see W. H. Crook, op. cit., Chap. III.
2. B. Seebohm Rowntree, Land and Labour; Lessons from Belgium, London, Macmillan, 1910, as quoted in R. C. K. Ensor, Belgium, London, Williams & Norgate, 1915, p. 171.
3. Emile Vandervelde, La grève générale en Belgique, Paris, F. Alcan, 1914, pp. 94-97.
4. E. Mahaim, "The General Strike in Belgium," Econ. Journal, June, 1913.
5. Cyrille van Overbergh, La grève générale, Brussels, Misch et Thron, 1913, pp. 56-57.
6. Ibid., pp. 104-109.

7. Mahaim, op. cit., pp. 294-297.
8. Vandervelde, op. cit., p. 237.
9. Ibid., pp. 234 ff.; Overbergh, op. cit., p. 148.
10. Overbergh, op. cit., pp. 149, 151.
11. Ibid., p. 154; Mahaim, loc. cit.; London Times, April 21, 1913.
12. Overbergh, op. cit., pp. 176 ff.
13. Vandervelde, op. cit., p. 246.
14. Overbergh, op. cit., p. 173.
15. London Times, April 15, 21, 25, 1913.
16. Overbergh, op. cit., pp. 160-166.
17. Ibid., pp. 182-189; 167-169.
18. The Resolution proposed follows:
 - (1) That the strike had attained impressive completeness and discipline and had proved the power and solidarity of the working class.
 - (2) That the strike had placed before the public in the most pressing manner the question of universal suffrage.
 - (3) That the strike had compelled discussion of the question in Parliament for more than a week, and had won a precise statement of intention from the Government leader as to the establishment of an electoral commission. That in view of these achievements the National Committee would propose to Congress the immediate resumption of work.
- Overbergh, op. cit., pp. 221-223.
19. London Times, April 28, 1913.
20. Paris Herald-Tribune, March 22, 1950.
21. Paris, Herald-Tribune, March 18, 1950. Le Peuple, Socialist party organ, spoke bitterly of Leopold's "captivity" at Laeken while 60,000 Belgian officers and soldiers were imprisoned in prison camps. March 2, 1950. For reference to unity see Le Peuple, March 14, 1950.
22. Syndicats, March 4, 11, 1950.
23. Paris Herald-Tribune, March 18, 1950.
24. Ibid., March 20, 1950.
25. Ibid., March 25, 1950; N. Y. Times, March 25, 1950.
26. N. Y. Times, August 10, 1952.
27. Syndicats, August 9, 1952.
28. Le Peuple, August 11, 1950; N. Y. Times, August 10, 14, 1952.
29. For the early history of the French labor movement and its concern with the weapon of the general strike, see

W. H. Crook, op. cit., Chapter II.

30. See below, Chapter XIII. Pertinax in Echo de Paris, quoted by the N.Y. Times, February 14, 1934. The French Foreign Office was unable to reach Vienna by international telephone and issue a warning against the destruction of the Austrian Social Democrats.

31. Val Lorwin, Trade Unions in France, 1953 (Ph. D. Thesis, Cornell), pp. 100-110. See also Edouard Dolléans, Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier, Colin, Paris, 1948, pp. 323-335.

32. N.Y. Times, Topics of the Times, January 23, 1954. By permission.

33. Ibid., February 8, 9, 11, 1934. Le Temps (Paris), February 7, 1934.

34. N.Y. Times, February 5, 1934.

35. P.J. Philip, N.Y. Times, February 11, 1934.

36. Quoted by N.Y. Times, February 8, 1934. By permission.

37. P.J. Philip, N.Y. Times, February 7, 1934.

38. Ibid., February 8, 1934.

39. Ibid.

40. Alexander Werth, Which Way France? New York, Harper & Bros., 1937, pp. 56-61.

41. P.J. Philip, op. cit., February 12, 13, 1934. By permission.

42. Le Temps (Paris), February 12, 1934.

43. Ibid., February 13, 14, 1934; P.J. Philip, op. cit., February 18, 1934; New Republic, February 21, 1934.

44. Nineteen thirty-five saw the reunion of the C.G.T. and the C.G.T.U. The C.G.T. claimed 750,000 members, the C.G.T.U. 250,000. Val Lorwin, op. cit., pp. 143-148.

45. The Socialists won 146 seats against 97 in the previous election; the Radical Socialists took 115 seats against 158, and the Communist party jumped from 10 seats to 72. See Henri Prouteau, Les Occupations d'Usines en Italie et en France, Paris (Doctoral Thesis), 1937, pp. 101 ff.

46. Prouteau, op. cit., pp. 97 ff.

47. Herald-Tribune (Paris), June 8, 1936.

48. Val Lorwin, op. cit., pp. 153 ff.

49. Ibid., pp. 170 ff. "Decree-laws" were administrative decrees with the validity of law, and were, in effect, an abdication by the Chamber of its law-making function. See N.Y. Times, November 27, 1938, for description of "decree-laws."

50. Estimates of the number of strikers fired vary from 700,000 to 70,000. The most likely figures are the latter. Contrast the Philadelphia Record, December 2, 1934, with the N. Y. Times, December 2, 3, 1934.
51. Val Lorwin, op. cit., pp. 207-210.
52. Ibid., pp. 212-218.
53. Wall Street Journal, December 9, 1947.
54. Val Lorwin, op. cit., pp. 234-237. By permission.
55. Charles R. Hargrove, writing from Paris to the Wall Street Journal, December 5, 1947. By permission.
56. Freda Kirchwey, Nation, December 13, 1947, "Behind the French 'Insurrection.'" As the Communists called off the strikes, the Schuman government announced a 40 per cent increase in minimum wages and a cost-of-living bonus for all workers. See Wall Street Journal, December 10, 1947.
57. N. Y. Times, October 26, 1948.
58. Ibid., November 25, 27, 1949.
59. Newsweek, December 5, 1949. By permission.
60. Paris Herald-Tribune, November 18, 1949; Ce Soir (Paris, alleged "Independent," but really Party line), November 19, 1949.
61. Val Lorwin, op. cit., p. 258.
62. Theodore H. White, "Russian Orders and French Blood," The Reporter, July 8, 1952, pp. 27-29.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. N. Y. Times, June 5, 1952.
66. Ibid., News of the Week, August 16, 1953.
67. N. Y. Times, August 22, 23, 24, 1953.
68. Ibid., August 26, 1953.
69. Ibid. By permission.
70. Henry Giniger, "Behind France's Strikes: a Low Living Standard," N. Y. Times, News of the Week, August 16, 1953.
71. N. Y. Times, April 29, 1954.

Chapter XIII

1. H. G. Daniels, The Rise of the German Republic, New York, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1928, pp. 124-131.
2. Gustav Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, Berlin, 1920, p. 207.
3. Karl Brammer, Fünf Tage Militärdiktatur, Berlin,

1920, p. 65; London Times, March 15, 1920.

4. Berlin Vorwärts, March 15, 1920.

5. Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1948, p. 124.

6. Ibid., p. 123. By permission.

7. Berliner Tageblatt, March 24, 1920; Karl Brammer, op. cit., p. 22.

8. Karl Brammer, op. cit., p. 36; London Times, March 18, 19, 1920.

9. The settlement terms included:

Nomination of state and Prussian cabinets by trade unions and the parties. Punishment of Kappist leaders, including all officials who aided them. All administrative offices to be democratized. Dismissal of all proved to have been disloyal to the Constitution.

Framing of new social laws giving more rights and privileges to civil servants.

Socialization of all industries ripe for it; nationalization of coal and potash syndicates.

Punishment of speculation in foodstuffs. Confiscation of agricultural products and of land improperly cultivated.

Dissolution of the Reichswehr. Replacement by organized labor.

Resignation of Noske. See London Times, March 22, 1920. Vorwärts, March 22, 1920.

10. Heinrich Ströbel, Die deutsche Revolution, 4th ed., Berlin, Der Firn, 1922, p. 192. London Times, March 29, 30, 1920.

11. For Vienna's anomalous position see Leo Pasvolsky's excellent summary, Economic Nationalism of the Danubian States, New York, Macmillan, 1928, Chap. VII.

12. Neil Forbes Grant, "Gay Austria," Atlantic Monthly, September, 1927. Cf. also Harry J. Carman, "The Vienna Riots," Current History, September, 1927.

13. N.Y. Times, February 14, 1934, Topics of the Times, p. 18.

14. Carman, op. cit., and Clarence K. Streit, "A Priest Who is Austria's Strong Man," N.Y. Times, Magazine Section, July 31, 1927.

15. T. J. C. Martyn, "Austria's Unrest Due to Economic Break-up," N.Y. Times, July 24, 1927; Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 22, 1927.

16. Vienna Arbeiter-Zeitung, July 15, 1927.
 17. Special bulletin of the Social Democrat Party Mitteilungs-Blatt No. 1, issued in Vienna Saturday, July 16, 1927.
 18. Ibid. Cf. statement by Dr. Oskar Pollak, Vienna correspondent of the Daily Herald (London), July 26, 1927.
 19. Mitteilungs-Blatt, loc. cit.
 20. Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 22, 1927.
 21. Ibid.; London Times, Weekly ed., July 21, 1927.
- George Seldes, American reporter present at this riot, definitely alleges the crowd was led and the fire started by young Communists. Cf. his book, You Can't Print That!, New York, Payson & Clark, 1929, pp. 449-452.
22. Ibid. Cf. N.Y. Times, July 20, 1927, and Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 22, 1927.
 23. Mitteilungs-Blatt, No. 1, July 16, 1927.
 24. Ibid., No. 2, July 16, 1927. The international trains were stopped at the Austrian border and re-routed. Cf. N.Y. Times, July 17, 1927.
 25. Ibid., No. 3, July 17, 1927. The Socialist Schutzbund had come to the aid of the police against the mob led by the Communists. Cf. N.Y. Times, July 18, 1927.
 26. Navarre Atkinson's wire to the N.Y. Times, July 18, 1927. For Atkinson's dramatic escape from Vienna and the difficulties met in telegraphing the United States see George Seldes, op. cit., pp. 455-456.
 27. N.Y. Times, July 27, 1927.
 28. Navarre Atkinson, N.Y. Times, July 19, 1927.
 29. N.Y. Times, July 18, 1927.
 30. Harry J. Carman, loc. cit.
 31. N.Y. Times, May 6, 1928.
 32. Ibid., February 18, 1934.
 33. Ibid., February 13, 1934.
 34. G.E.R. Gedye, N.Y. Times, February 13, 1934.
 35. N.Y. Times, February 13, 1934.
 36. Gedye, N.Y. Times, February 18, 1934.
 37. N.Y. Times, February 18, 1934.
 38. Le Temps (Paris), February 12, 1934.
 39. N.Y. Times, February 14, 1934. By permission.
 40. Ibid. By permission.
 41. Ibid., February 13, 1934.
 42. Ibid., February 18, 1934.
 43. Ibid., February 19, 20, 1934.

44. See Pertinax, Echo de Paris, quoted by N. Y. Times, February 14, 1934.
45. N. Y. Times, February 18, 1934.
46. Ibid., February 28, 1934.
47. Ibid., February 23, 1953.
48. P. J. Bouman, De April-Meistakingen van 1943, Nijhoff (English Summary), 1950. By permission. For an earlier general strike in the Netherlands, against the Nazis, said to have been prepared by the Communist party, see Appendix. Full data are not available at time of writing this chapter.
49. Salvatore Cortesi, "The Premier of Italy and the Subversive Elements," The Independent, December 15, 1904.
50. Hubert Lagardelle, op. cit., p. 363, quoting Filippo Turati.
51. London Times, June 17, 1914; Encyclopedia Britannica, 13th ed., II, 1009.
52. Die Neue Zeit, July 31, 1914. Cf. London Times, June 17, 1914.
53. W. E. Walling, Socialism of Today, New York, H. Holt & Co., 1916, pp. 421-425.
54. Walter Galenson, Comparative Labor Movements, New York, Prentice Hall, 1952, pp. 440-441. See also, for early Italian labor history, W. H. Crook, op. cit., pp. 183-191.
55. Manchester Guardian Weekly, Editorial, "Showdown in Italy?" December 9, 1954; N. Y. Times, April 17, 1954.
56. N. Y. Times, February 24, 1954, quoting Professor Maurice Newfield.
57. Manchester Guardian Weekly, "Strength of the Communists in Italy," March 18, 1954; N. Y. Times, July 20, 1954. See also Galenson, op. cit., Chap. VI.
58. C. L. Sulzberger, N. Y. Times, March 16, 1954.
59. Arnold Cortesi, N. Y. Times, December 18, 1946. By permission.
60. Arnold Cortesi, ibid., October 29, 1947.
61. Data from the N. Y. Times.
62. Ibid., April 1, 1948.
63. Paris Herald-Tribune.
64. N. Y. Times, June 21, 1935. By permission.
65. Ibid., February 4, 1948. By permission.
66. Oscar Weigert, "Co-determination in Western Germany," Monthly Labor Review, December, 1951.
67. Ibid.

68. For outline of the labor-management laws see Oscar Weigert, op. cit. See also "Labor and Management in Western Germany," Manchester Guardian Weekly, February 22, 1951; "Joint Management in Industry," ibid., August 7, 1952.

69. N. Y. Times, July 20, 1952; September 13, 1953.

70. Ibid., January 21, 1955. Manchester Guardian Weekly, January 27, 1955. For the story of the alleged "blackmail" see J. F. G. Gillen, Labor Problems in West Germany, Chap. IV, "Co-determination," History Div. Office of Exec. Sec., Office of U. S. High Commissioner for Germany.

71. "After the Revolt," Manchester Guardian Weekly, August 27, 1953.

72. Terrance Prittie, "The Rising of June 17," Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 2, 1953; July 16, 1953; Mark Arnold-Forster, "The June 17 Rising: Recoil of the Lies," Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 30, 1953.

73. Theodore Lit, "Unions in Democratic and Soviet Germany," Monthly Labor Review, January 1953, pp. 6 ff.

74. N. Y. Times, "Berlin Uprising," June 21, 1953. By permission.

75. Prittie, op. cit., July 2, 1953. Among the cities listed as centers of general strike action were Brandenburg, Chemnitz, Halle, Leipzig, Dresden, Rostock, Erfurt, Warnemunde, and Henningsdorf, with a great conflict between the People's Police and the strikers at Magdeburg. See N. Y. Times, June 19, 22, 1953. See also Rainer Hildebrandt, The Explosion (translated E. B. Ashton), New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1955.

76. Prittie, loc. cit.

77. "After the Revolt; Defiant Mood Continues," Manchester Guardian Weekly, September 3, 1953; see also N. Y. Times, October 15, 1953, January 4, 1954, June 19, 1954.

78. N. Y. Times, June 21, 22, 1953.

79. "Fact and Feeling in the Cyprus Problem," Manchester Guardian Weekly, October 14, 1954.

80. N. Y. Times, August 12, 1954.

81. Ibid., August 13, 1954.

82. Ibid., August 29, 1954.

83. Ibid., December 19, 1954.

84. Ibid., September 29, 1955.

85. Ibid., March 11, 1956.

86. Manchester Guardian Weekly, March 15, 1956.

87. "British Step up Pressure to hold Cyprus," N. Y. Times, March 25, 1956.

88. See Nancy Crawshaw, "The Tyranny of E.O.K.A.," Manchester Guardian Weekly, October 9, 1958.
89. Manchester Guardian Weekly, March 5, 12, 19, 1959.
90. UP wire December 12, 1956; N.Y. Times, December 13, 1956.
91. Ibid. By permission.
92. Ibid.
93. Washington Post, February 5, 1957. N.Y. Times, February 7, 1957.
94. N.Y. Times, February 5, 7, 1957.
95. Ibid., March 24, 30, 1957. Washington Post, April 2, 1957.
96. N.Y. Times, May 22, 24, 1957.
97. Washington Post, May 24, 1957.
98. N.Y. Times, September 21, 23, 24, 1957.

Chapter XIV

1. Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg; Her Life and Work, (translated Edward Fitzgerald), London, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1940, Chap. V.
2. Jacob Walkin, "Attitude of the Tsarist Government toward the Labor Problem," American Slavic and East European Review, April, 1954, pp. 163-184.
3. London Times, January 23, 24, 1905; G.R. Treviranus, Revolutions in Russia: their Lessons for the Western World, New York and London, Harper & Bros., 1944, pp. 12, 13.
4. London Times, January 23, 24, 1905; Harold W. Williams, Russia of the Russians, New York, Chas. Scribners Sons, 1916, pp. 63-65. Gapon had interviewed the Minister of Justice on January 21, and sought for permission to deliver personally his petition for a Constituent Assembly of all Russia, universal suffrage and a secret ballot. London Times, January 21, 1905.
5. London Times, February 6, 1905.
6. Ibid., January 26, 30, 1905.
7. Werner Sombart, Der Proletarische Sozialismus, Jena, G. Fischer, 1924, II, 238, quoting Trotsky.
8. Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, Trotsky 1879-1921, New York, Oxford University Press, 1954, pp. 110-111, quoting Trotsky's Sochineniya, II, Bk. 1, p. 50. By permission.

9. London Times, October 21, 1905; P. Kropotkin, Living Age, December 30, 1905, pp. 771-785.
10. E. J. Dillon, "Russia in Revolution," Contemporary Review, December, 1905, p. 885.
11. London Times, October 12, 1905.
12. Ibid., October 9, 1905; New York Tribune, October 11, 1905.
13. New York Tribune, October 12, 13, 1905.
14. London Times, October 17, 18; New York Tribune, October 19, 1905.
15. H. W. Williams, op. cit., p. 68; London Times, October 21, 23, 1905.
16. London Times, October 23, 24, 25, 1905.
17. Ibid., October 25, 1905.
18. Ibid., October 30, 1905.
19. New York Tribune, October 31, 1905.
20. London Times, October 31, 1905.
21. E. J. Dillon, op. cit., p. 888; London Times, October 31, 1905.
22. Isaac Deutscher, op. cit., pp. 125 ff.
23. Ibid., pp. 127-129. Bertram D. Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, New York, Dial Press, 1948, Chap. VIII.
24. London Times, November 1, 1905.
25. Ibid., November 3, 1905. Cf. Deutscher, op. cit., p. 132.
26. Ibid., November 4, 1905. Cf. Deutscher, op. cit., p. 128.
27. Ibid., November 6, 1905. A wage increase; abolition of martial law on the railroads; a commission, including rail workers' representative, to consider improvements in conditions of work; freedom of meeting to discuss strike questions; reemployment of strikers; special concessions to Polish rail workers.
28. London Times, November 16, 20, 22, 1905. Cf. Bertram D. Wolfe, op. cit., p. 326.
29. London Times, November 17, 1905.
30. Ibid., November 20, 1905.
31. Ibid., December 20, 21, 22, 1905. Cf. Bertram D. Wolfe, op. cit., pp. 329-331.
32. For Rosa Luxemburg's part in the 1905 strike movement and comments on same, see Frölich, op. cit., Chap. V.
33. Gregor Alexinsky, Modern Russia, New York, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1913, Bk. IV, Chap. 2.

34. Cf. Deutscher, op. cit., Chap. IX. Trotsky claimed that no more than 30,000 at the most participated directly in the October insurrection. Cf. Deutscher, p. 319.

35. Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, 3 vols., Berlin, 1931-33, translated by Max Eastman, New York, 1932, Bk. II, Chap. VI, p. 148. The strike took place on August 12, 1917. Trotsky alleges that 400,000 workers joined the strike. Not all the Bolshevik leaders had this assurance that the time had come to make the revolution. Some had felt that the workers were ready in enough numbers to seize the government as early as July, 1917. Others were quite unsure that the preparations for revolution were adequate. This is no place for that discussion. The important fact is that until the Communists capture governmental power they use the general strike to the limit. After that, they have no use for it. Cf. Deutscher, op. cit., pp. 291-293.

36. Elspeth Georgi, Theorie und Praxis des Generalstreiks in der Modernen Arbeiterbewegung, Jena, G. Fischer, 1908, pp. 64-65.

37. John Spargo, Syndicalism, Industrial Unionism and Socialism, New York, Huebsch, 1913, Appendix 3, p. 214.

38. Frölich, op. cit., p. 156.

39. W.E. Walling, Socialism of Today, New York, H. Holt & Co., 1916, p. 391.

40. Ibid., p. 414.

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Cf. H.G. Daniels, The Rise of the German Republic, New York, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1928, p. 7.

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43. Daniels, op. cit., pp. 21-28. Boston Globe, November 10, 1918.

44. Gustav Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, Berlin, 1920, pp. 10-24; Encyclopedia Britannica, 13th ed., II, pp. 210, 1090.

45. The Living Age, "The Documentary History of the German Revolution," March 1, 1919. For detailed history of the Spartacist debacle see Rudolph Coper, Failure of a Revolution, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1955.

46. Ibid.; Daniels, op. cit., p. 45.

47. The Living Age, loc. cit.

48. Frölich, op. cit., pp. 285-287.

49. Daniels, op. cit., pp. 51-53, 62-72.

50. Manchester Guardian, January 10, 1919.
51. Noske, op. cit., pp. 68-72. New York Evening Post, January 7, 1919.
52. Daniels, op. cit., p. 79.
53. New York Evening Post, January 18, 1919. They were killed on January 16, 1919.
54. Sidney Zimand, "The German General Strike," Social-ist Review, March, 1920.
55. Daniels, op. cit., pp. 107-109. Cf. Noske, op. cit., p. 109.
56. Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Labyrinth, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1944, p. xi. By permission.
57. Ibid., p. 192. By permission.
58. Stoddard Dewey, "The Anarchist Movement in Spain," Contemporary Review, May, 1902, pp. 743-745; cf. Brenan, op. cit., pp. 145, 172, 195.
59. Andre Saulière, La Grève Générale de Robert Owen à la Doctrine Syndicaliste, Paris, 1913 (Doctoral Thesis), pp. 40 ff.
60. Arnold Roller, The Social General Strike, London, Freedom Press, 1912, p. 24; cf. Brenan, op. cit., p. 154.
61. London Times, February 19-21, 1902. Cf. Georgi, op. cit., p. 89.
62. London Times, February 19, March 1, 1902. Cf. Pablo Iglesias, "La Grève Générale," Le Mouvement Socialiste, March 8, 1902, and same author in Lagardelle, La Grève Générale et le Socialisme, p. 321.
63. London Times, July 27, 28, 30, August 7, 10, 1909.
64. Ibid., October 7, 1909; cf. Sir Arthur Clay, Syndicalism and Labour, London, J. Murray, 1911, p. 89.
65. Brenan, op. cit., pp. 66-71, 174-176. The Socialistic trade union federation, the U.G.T., was founded in 1888. It was moderate, disciplined, and without immediate revolutionary aims. Its strikes were aimed at economic gains and were generally peaceful. Bilbao and Madrid seem to have been the main centers of its influence, and its growth was slow. Low money wages of labor and a relatively high membership fee were in part the explanation. The U.G.T. was responsible for introducing the Casas del Pueblo, which were centers for union activity and free libraries in a land where education for workers was scarce indeed. In contrast to the U.G.T., the labor organization whose members were imbued with the anarchistic

outlook was the C.N.T., founded in 1910 but descending from still older organizations. To them the prime weapon for bringing the social revolution was the general strike. Their strikes were frequently far from peaceful, and more often than not were ended by police or military with an inevitably heavy death roll on the part of the strikers. Barcelona was the stronghold of the C.N.T. Gunmen ("pistoleros") were used freely by both the C.N.T. and the employers, and agents provocateurs by the various conservative or reactionary governments in Madrid and Barcelona. After the 1917 experience the C.N.T., organized by the plant rather than by the craft, and the new groups were the sindicatos unicos. Because it was against the whole principle of the anarchist unions to have paid officers or to pay strike benefits, strikes were apt to be short, and sabotage and violence were likely when strikes lasted more than a day or two. Poverty of the workers and of sindicatos unicos inevitably led to violent methods as actual hunger pressed upon strikers and their families. Cf. Brenan, op. cit., Chaps. VIII and X.

66. Cf. Allison Peers, The Spanish Tragedy, 1930-1936, London, Methuen, 1936, pp. 13, 16. N.Y. Times, November 17, 1930.

67. Ibid., p. 68. Brenan, op. cit., p. 240.

68. Brenan, op. cit., p. 241. Peers, op. cit., p. 118.

69. Brenan, op. cit., p. 257.

70. Ibid., Chap. XII. Cf. Peers, op. cit., p. 148. A long and bitter strike of textile workers organized by the I.W.W. in Lawrence, Massachusetts, included a transfer of strikers' children to sympathizers in other cities. Great publicity of a character that was not desired by either the industry or the Commonwealth was its result.

71. Brenan, op. cit., p. 276.

72. Henry Buckley, Life and Death of the Spanish Republic, London, Hamilton, 1940, Chap. XVII. Cf. Peers, op. cit., pp. 168-172. Brenan, op. cit., pp. 284-288.

73. Peers, op. cit., pp. 204-208. Brenan, op. cit., p. 308. Cf. Claude G. Bowers, My Mission to Spain, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1954.

74. The "foreign armed forces" referred to were of course Italian and to a much lesser extent skilled technicians from Nazi Germany. In the International Brigade there were undoubtedly some Russians, but in no degree comparable with the Italian forces. For this aspect of the "civil war" see Bowers,

op. cit., throughout, and Buckley, op. cit.; Peers, op. cit., Chap. V, "Chaos"; Cedric Sutter, Try-out in Spain, pp. 137 ff, 144; G. A. Borgese, Goliath, the March of Fascism, New York, Viking Press, 1937, pp. 443-454; Patricia van der Esch, Prelude to War, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1951, especially Chaps. IX, X.

75. Syracuse Post-Standard, May 10, 1947. By permission.

76. The Commonweal, May 23, 1947. By permission.

Sam Brewer, N. Y. Times, May 11, 1947. By permission.

Spanish Information, June-July, 1947, "The Strike of Bilbao," pp. 312-313.

77. N. Y. Times, March 18, 1951. By permission.

78. Ibid., March 28, 1951. By permission.

79. Ibid., March 15, 19, 26, April 8, 1951.

80. Ibid., April 24, May 9, 1951, April 12, 1956.

81. Frank Tannenbaum, Whither Latin America? New York, Crowell, chap. 7; cf. Richard Behrendt, "Land for the People," Inter-Americana, Short Papers, v. Proceedings: Conf. on Lat. Amer. in Social and Economic Transition, April, 1943, University of New Mexico Press. See also: Wendell C. Gordon, The Economy of Latin America, New York, University of Columbia Press, 1950, Chaps. VI, IX. Arthur P. Whitaker, The United States and Argentina, Boston, Harvard University Press, 1954.

82. See W. H. Crook, The General Strike, University of North Carolina Press, 1931, Chap. XV.

83. N. Y. Times, March 8, 1931.

84. Olive Holmes, "Argentina, Focus of Conflict in the Americas," Foreign Policy Reports, XXI, 22, February 1, 1946.

85. N. Y. Times, October 10, 1945. By permission. See: Ray Josephs, Argentine Diary, New York, Random House, 1944, and Latin America: Continent in Crisis, 1948. Washington Post, October 19, 1945.

86. N. Y. Times, January 18, 1946. By permission. Southern Pacific Mail, January 17, 1946; Newsweek, January 21, 1946.

87. N. Y. Times, November 12, 1954.

88. Ibid., June 15, 16, 1955. The Perón government had obtained legislation authorizing divorce, dropping tax exemptions for church property, and eliminating financial support of Catholic schools.

89. Ibid., June 16, July 16, 1955. Cf. also Business

Week, June 25, 1955, pp. 132-133.

90. N. Y. Times, October 2, November 15, 16, 18, 20, 1955.
Manchester Guardian Weekly, October 28, 1955.

91. Juan de Unis, N. Y. Times, January 20, 1959.

92. N. Y. Times, June 30, July 1-9, 1944. See also
H. H. Hansen, Triumph and Disaster, London, H. M. Stationery
Office (for the Danish Council), 1945.

93. Laszlo Beke, A Student's Diary, Budapest, October 16-
November 1, 1956, New York, Viking Press, 1957.

94. N. Y. Times, December 16, 1956.

95. Ibid., October 27, 1956.

96. For discussion of the workers' terms of peace with the
short-lived Nagy government see James A. Michener, The
Bridge at Andau, New York, Random House, 1957, p. 160.

97. Ibid.

98. N. Y. Times, November 18, 1956.

99. Relman Morin, AP wire to Nashville Tennessean,
November 18, 1956.

100. AP Wire to Washington Post, November 16, 1956.

101. Nashville Tennessean, November 17, 1956.

102. N. Y. Times, November 18, 1956.

103. Reuters, Budapest, November 21, 1956. Washington
Post, November 22, 1956. AP, November 22, 1956.

104. MacCormac, N. Y. Times, November 26, 1956.

105. N. Y. Times, November 28, 1956.

106. AP in Springfield Union, December 10, 1956.

107. N. Y. Times, December 13, UP Vienna, December 12,
1956.

108. N. Y. Times, December 14, 16, 17, 1956. Washington
Post, December 14, 1956.

109. N. Y. Times, January 10, 12, 1957.

110. Ibid., February 11, 1957. AP Budapest, February 19,
1957.

111. N. Y. Times, March 15, 16, 1957.

112. One of the best recent studies on the Hungarian rising
and general strikes is by Melvin J. Lasky (editor), The Hun-
garian Revolution, New York, Praeger, 1957.

113. N. Y. Times, Editorial "Hungary and French Labor,"
November 27, 1956.

Chapter XV

1. See W. H. Crook, "Social Security and the General Strike," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. XLIX, September, 1934, pp. 411 ff.
2. Ibid., p. 417.
3. Eliel, op. cit., p. 150.

Chapter XVI

1. Benjamin Stolberg, "Will o' the Wisp of Labor," Herald Tribune, April 19, 1931, review of W. H. Crook, The General Strike, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1931.
2. For a significant treatment of this question, see Philip M. Hauser, Report to the U. S. Secretary of Commerce, "The Impact of the Coal Strike on the National Economy," November 27, 1946, as quoted in Edward H. Collins, "Anatomy of the General Strike," N. Y. Times, December 9, 1946.
3. Jack London, The Strength of the Strong, New York, Macmillan, 1914, "The Dream of Debs," pp. 134-176.
4. Masters, op. cit., p. 131. By permission.
5. W. H. Crook, op. cit., pp. 401-403.
6. "B. W.," Sheetmetal Workers' Quarterly, October, 1926, quoted by Postgate et al., A Workers' History of the Great Strike, London, Plebs League, 1927, pp. 34-35. See also W. H. Crook, op. cit., p. 412.
7. Seattle Union Record, quoted in W. H. Crook, op. cit., p. 533.
8. William MacDonald, "The Seattle Strike and Afterwards," The Nation, March 29, 1919, quoted in W. H. Crook, op. cit., p. 535.
9. W. H. Crook, op. cit., p. 534; "The Revolutionary Logic of the General Strike," American Political Science Review, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, August, 1934, p. 662.

Chapter XVII

1. Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence, New York, Peter Smith, 1941, translated T. E. Hulme, pp. 136-137.

2. Hubert Lagardelle, op. cit., p. 407.
3. Frölich, op. cit., p. 87, quoting Rosa Luxemburg's Collected Works (German), Vol. III, p. 366.
4. Ibid., pp. 158-159.
5. Ibid., p. 163.
6. Ibid., p. 132.
7. In 1866 the English delegates brought before the Geneva Congress of the First International the issue of the "reformist" general strike. General strikes did occur in St. Louis, New Orleans, and Philadelphia, but do not seem to have made much of a dent on strike theory.
8. From 1910, when Mann returned to England, until the outbreak of World War I, there was an epidemic of strikes all over Britain, some of which were genuine sympathy strikes, while others were nationwide of a whole industry, or "generalized" strikes, as we prefer to term them. A virtual general strike occurred in Dublin in 1913, under the leadership of Jim Larkin and of James Connolly, who had spent some seven years in the United States and knew about the theories and practices of the I. W. W. and the One Big Union.
9. Paul F. Brissenden, The I. W. W., A Study of American Syndicalism, New York, Columbia University Press, 1919, pp. 287-288.
10. William D. Haywood, The General Strike (Speech at Progress Assembly Rooms), New York, March 16, 1911.
11. Tom Mann, The Industrial Syndicalist, March, 1911.
12. New York Call, October 31, 1911.
13. J. Ramsay MacDonald, Syndicalism, a Critical Examination, London, Constable, 1912, pp. 62-64.
14. For details of this sea change in viewpoint of British leaders, see supra, chapters on the British General Strike, or W. H. Crook, op. cit., Chap. VIII to XIII.
15. The "war" party in the cabinet tried hard to make it a revolution. They were prevented by the rest of the cabinet, but the mobilization of armed forces was tremendous. Fortunately, these were kept out of sight of most of the workers and the public. See N. Y. Times, May 9, 1926.
16. Izvestia, June 9, 1926. U. S. Archives 841.5045/197. The General Council of the T. U. C. had refused monetary aid from the Russian Trades Unions, while the miners accepted it. By permission.
17. Lansbury's Labor Weekly, May 22, 1926.

18. Edgar A. Peers, The Spanish Tragedy, 1930-1936, New York, Oxford University Press, 1936, p. 205.

19. One marked exception was Winnipeg, where the strikers and the government were stiffened in spirit by the power of the Citizens' Committee.

20. Australia provides a different type of example. See Appendix. Cf. Herbert E. Weiner, "The Reduction of Communist Power in the Australian Trade Unions," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. LXIX, No. 3, pp. 390-410.

21. N.Y. Times, July 12, 1955.

22. Speech of May 21, 1926, translated in report of U.S. Legation in Riga, June 17, 1926, contained in U.S. Archives 841.5045/197. Cf. comment of the Legation: "Regardless of the donation of the Trades Unions check-off fund of 2,600,000 rubles to the British Mine Workers Union, Soviet interest in the British strike ceased when it became purely economic." Riga, May 21, 1926. Archives 841.5045/175. By permission.

23. "The East German Communist leaders have completed the subjugation of 5,000,000 trade unionists to strict Soviet-type control. A new labor statute effectively prohibits strikes of any kind." This is in contravention of the East German Constitution, Art. XVI. (Italics added) N.Y. Times, June 21, 1955. By permission.

24. Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, translated by Max Eastman, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1932, pp. 148 ff.

25. Hugh Seton-Watson, "Twentieth Century Revolutions," The Political Quarterly, Vol. XXII, pp. 251-265.

26. W. H. Crook, op. cit., p. 228.

Appendix

1. The Middle East Journal, July, 1949, pp. 277-292.

2. Washington Evening Star, March 4, 1946.

3. N.Y. Times, August 16, 1956. Reuter (Beirut), August 16, 1956.

4. Richard Wright, Black Power, New York, Harper Bros., 1954, Chap. XI. John Gunther, Inside Africa, New York, Harper Bros., 1953, p. 804, and Collier's, May 28, 1954. Barbara Ward, "An Answer to the Challenge of Africa," N.Y. Times, October 31, 1954.

5. "Morning After in Ghana," Manchester Guardian Weekly, March 21, 1957. William Clark, "Africans Face a Rugged Task," Washington Post, February 22, 1957.

6. N.Y. Times, February 1, December 9, 1952; October 10, 11, 16, 1955. AP wire to Daily Hampshire Gazette, November 16, 1954.

7. N.Y. Times, July 6, 1956.

8. Ibid., Editorial, April 21, 1936. For earlier Arab general strikes against Jewish immigration, see N.Y. Times, August 14, 1930; August 18, 1931.

9. The Nation, April 8, 1936.

10. Thomas B. Stauffer, "Labor Unions in the Arab States," The Middle East Journal, Winter, 1952.

11. N.Y. Times, April 22, 25, 1936.

12. Washington Post, February 3, 1946.

13. N.Y. Times, December 13, 1946; October 4, 1947.

14. Ibid., August 13-23, 1953.

15. The author is indebted to the following for sources: S.D. Punekar, Trade Unionism in India, Bombay, New Book Co., and Prem Chand Malhotra, The Indian Labor Movement, Delhi, 1949. The Indian Independence Act was passed by the British Parliament in 1947. In 1950 India became a sovereign republic within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

16. The Indian hartal (civil disobedience, general strike) had a long history of use under Gandhi's leadership, especially during 1930-1931, to obtain freedom from the British Empire. In March, 1931, the Hindus of Cawnpore tried to force observance of their hartal upon the Moslems. The latter refused to close their businesses, and many districts in Cawnpore became a shambles with mutual butchery and incendiarism. See Manchester Guardian Weekly, May 1, 1931.

17. The Times of India, November 7-12, 1938. Labour Monthly (Communist in character), ed. R. Palme Dutt, January, 1939.

18. Amrita Bazar Patrika of Calcutta. Calcutta Statesman.

19. Amrita Bazar Patrika.

20. N.Y. Times. Calcutta Amrita Bazar Patrika. Patna Indian Nation.

21. N.Y. Times, August 17, 18, 1955.

22. Ibid., February 11, 1956.

23. Ibid., January 20, 1956.

24. Ibid., January 21, 1956.

25. Ibid., January 22, 1956.
26. Ibid., February 25, 1956.
27. Ibid., July 8, 1956.
28. "Conditions of Labour in the Surabaya Metal Industry," International Labour Review, June, 1927, pp. 888-895. "Right to Strike in Dutch East Indies," International Labour Review, July, 1932, pp. 75-80.
29. N. Y. Times, August 11, 1954.
30. Ibid., December 18, 1956.
31. George Sokolsky, "These Days," Daily Hampshire Gazette, October 26, 1953.
32. George Sokolsky, The China Year Book, 1926.
33. For details concerning the Shanghai strike see W.H. Crook, op. cit., Chapter XVI.
34. Ta Chen, "Study of Strikes in China from 1918 to 1925," Monthly Labor Review, October, 1926. Cf. Stanley High, "Labor Problems in China in 1925," Monthly Labor Review, June, 1926.
35. China Weekly Review, Strike edition, June 13, 1925. (That edition wholly printed by foreigners.)
36. Ibid., June 13, July 25, 1925.
37. China Year Book, 1926.
38. About 500,000 workers lined up behind the General Labor Union. Of these, says Wei Lin, about 17,000 were Communists. Wei Lin, "The Pro-Nationalist Strike, February 19-24, 1927," Chinese Labor Disputes since 1919, pp. 86-90, Nanking, Mei Chi Press Ltd., 1932. Ta Chen, "The Labour Movement in China," International Labour Review, March, 1927. N. Y. Times, February 12, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 1947.
39. Manchester Guardian Weekly, July 16, 21, 1955.
40. N. Y. Times, June 13, 14, 18, July 26, August 1-3, 1955.
40. Herbert E. Weiner, "The Reduction of Communist Power in the Australian Trade Unions," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. LXIX, pp. 396, 412.
41. "The Brisbane General Strike," The Round Table (London), No. 7, June, 1912, pp. 472-495.
42. Notes on Labor Abroad, August, 1950.
43. N. Y. Times, February 23, 1948.
44. Ibid., February 27, March 2, 1956.
45. Ibid., March 7, 9, 1956.
46. Ibid., March 7, 9, 17, 21, 1956.
47. P. Kastari, Yleislakko ja perustuslaki (The General

Strike and the Constitution). Valtio ja Yhteisk. 16, 1956, pp. 51-71, in International Political Science Abstracts, VII, No. 3 (1957). Translated from the French by Professor Rodney L. Mott, Colgate University.

48. N.Y. Times, June 19, 1946.

49. Ibid., December 11, 1949. For Greek use of the general strike in protest against Britain in Cyprus, see Chapter XIII above.

50. See V. H. Vliegen, "Les événements de Hollande," in Le Mouvement Socialiste, April 15, 1903. Lagardelle, op. cit., Georgi, op. cit. London Times, through April, 1903.

51. B. A. Sijes, De Februari-Staking, February 25-26, 1941, Monograph N 5, Amsterdam, Martinus Nijhoff, S. Gravenage, 1954. Copyright by Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation, Amsterdam. English Summary, pp. 215-228.

52. London wire to N.Y. Times, November 14, 1918. Cf. N.Y. Times, February 2, 1918.

53. N.Y. Times, September 22, 1918.

54. Ibid., November 21, 1918.

55. "Latin American Trade Unionism," The Economist, April 8, 1944. Cf. Eugene Davis Owen, "Recent Latin American Labor Codes," The Inter-American Quarterly, Vol. 3, 1941. Simon G. Hanson, Ed., Economic Development in Latin America, Washington, Inter-Amer. Affairs Press, 1951, Chapter XV.

56. N.Y. Times, June 26, July 2, September 1, 2, 1954. New Statesman and Nation, September 4, 1954.

57. N.Y. Times, July 3, 1954, and signed articles by Sam Pope Brewer, June 26, August 29, 30, 31, September 1-4, 1954. See Simon G. Hanson, op. cit., Chapter XII.

58. New Statesman and Nation, September 4, 1954, lists certain important conditions in Brazil that made this tension almost inevitable: (1) A ruthless managerial class demanded the workers foot the bill. (2) A growing industrial proletariat expected some Perónist reforms. (3) The military and the bureaucrats were set to retain their privileges. (4) Old school, foreign financiers sought to strengthen international monopolies. (5) The Catholic Church tried to arbitrate between these groups, and to put brakes upon the existing inflation.

59. N.Y. Times, October 10-18, 1953.

60. Sam Pope Brewer, "Bitterness in Guiana's Sugar Bowl," N.Y. Times, November 1, 1953.

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62. London Times, January 12, 1932. Southern Pacific Mail, January 14, 1932.
63. N. Y. Times, January 31, 1946. Washington Post, February 3, 4, 1946. Washington Star, February 2, 3, 5, 1946. Southern Pacific Mail, January 24, 31, 1946.
64. Sam Pope Brewer, N. Y. Times, May 18, 21, 1954.
65. N. Y. Times, July 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 1955.
66. Ibid., January 10, 1956.
67. Ibid., January 4, 1956.
68. Ibid., September 4, 1955.
69. Ibid., January 8, 10, 1956.
70. Ibid., September 2, 1955.
71. Ibid., December 31, 1955.
72. Ibid., September 2, 1955.
73. Ibid., January 29, 1956.
74. Ibid., January 8, 9, 10, 1956.
75. Notes on Labor Abroad, June, 1947, No. 2, p. 35 ff.
76. See N. Y. Times, April 13, 1948.
77. It was alleged that President Machado imprisoned, exiled or killed his enemies but was unable to exterminate the opposition. See Russell Porter, "Cuba Under President Machado," Current History, April, 1933.
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82. See Jules Dubois, Fidel Castro, Rebel, Liberator or Dictator?, Indianapolis, Bobbs Merrill Co., 1959.
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88. West Coast Leader, Lima, May 18, 1931. A general

strike was declared on June 21, 1931, in protest against the treatment of the workers in the oil fields and sugar plantations. The General Confederation of Peruvian Workers held a meeting at the University (Lima), asking the students to aid in changing the country's government. N.Y. Times, June 22, 1931.

89. N.Y. Times, June 27, 1956.

90. Ibid., February 13, 1932.

91. Ibid., February 13, 1936.

92. Ibid., June 12, 1936.

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ADDENDUM

ADDENDUM: Chapter IX (page 125)

On the twelfth day of October, 1934, the arbitration decision on the longshoremen's dispute was completed and published. The main points handled can be summarized:

(1) The parties involved are the I. L. A. "acting on behalf of various locals whose members perform longshore labor," and four other parties, the Waterfront Employers of Portland, the Waterfront Employers of Seattle, the Waterfront Employers' Union of San Francisco and the Marine Service Bureau of Los Angeles, "separately."

(2) The agreement is binding on all five parties till September 30, 1935; will automatically renew from year to year unless 40 days prior to expiration date written notice is given of desire to modify or terminate.

(3) Six hours shall be a day's work, thirty a week's work (averaged over four weeks). All other work shall be designated overtime. Straight time shall be "the first six hours worked between the hours of 8 a. m. and 5 p. m." Meal time any one hour between 11 a. m. and 1 p. m. All time over five hours without a meal shall be paid at time and a half the rate for the period worked.

(4) Basic rate of pay not less than 95 cents an hour for straight time, \$1.40 for overtime.

(5) All hiring shall be through hiring halls "maintained and operated jointly "by the Pacific Coast District I. L. A. and the respective employers' association.

(6) Each longshoreman registered at the hiring hall who is not a member of the I. L. A. shall pay to the support of the hall a sum equivalent to that paid by I. L. A. members.

(7) A Labor Relations Committee, three designated by the I. L. A., and three by the employers' association shall maintain and operate the halls, and shall within 30 days prepare a list of the "regular longshoremen of the port." No one shall be

registered "who did not, during a period of three years immediately preceding May 9, 1934, derive his livelihood from the industry during not less than any twelve months." No longshoreman not so registered shall be dispatched or employed while there is any man on the registered list qualified, etc.

(8) The dispatcher shall be selected by the I. L. A.

(9) As nearly as practicable men shall be dispatched so as to equalize their earnings, having regard for their qualifications, etc.

(10) The employer has the right to discharge. A discharge can be made a grievance and heard by the Labor Relations Committee.

(11) Employers are free from restraint by the I. L. A. if introducing labor saving devices, provided safety and health of employee is not endangered.

(For full report see Eliel, op. cit., Appendix, Exhibit "KKK" pp. 240-243.)

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